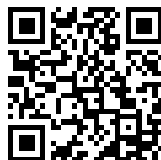


---

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google<sup>TM</sup> books

<https://books.google.com>

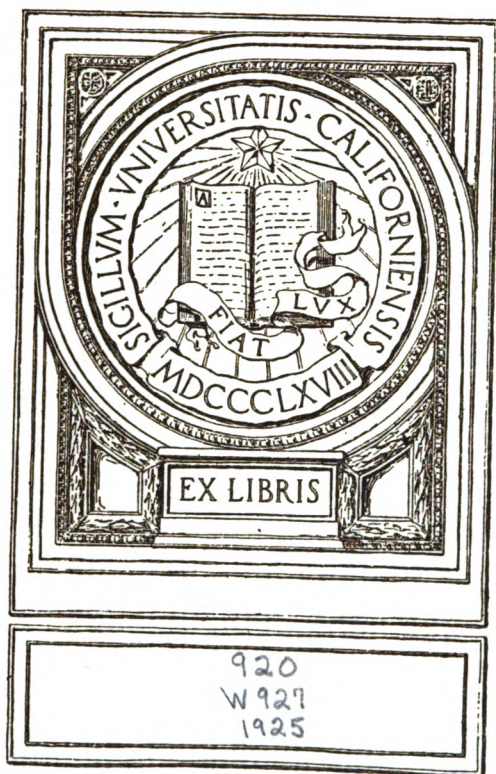




*The World's* BEST  
SHORT STORIES  
OF 1925

















*The World's* BEST  
SHORT STORIES OF 1925







*The World's* BEST  
SHORT STORIES  
OF 1925

SIXTEEN TALES SELECTED BY  
THE EDITORS OF THE  
LEADING AMERICAN  
MAGAZINES.

WITH A FOREWORD BY  
WILLIAM JOHNSTON

NEW  YORK  
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



Rec. 619619

COPYRIGHT, 1925,  
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



LITTLE FRAÜLEIN AND THE BIG WORLD—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE  
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE COMPANY, INC.  
(*Good Housekeeping*)

STANDING ROOM ONLY—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE INTERNATIONAL  
MAGAZINE COMPANY, INC. (*Cosmopolitan*)

SHACKLES OF SERVICE—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY DOUBLEDAY PAGE &  
COMPANY (*Short Stories Magazine*)

ROMANCE AND SALLY BYRD—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE CROWELL  
PUBLISHING COMPANY

THE PRIMITIVE—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY F. R. BUCKLEY  
THE DANCER OF PARIS—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE RIDGWAY  
COMPANY

WILD BILL McCORKLE—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE CROWELL PUB-  
LISHING COMPANY (*American Magazine*)

THE BIOGRAPHY OF BLADE—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE CENTURY  
COMPANY

LOUTRÉ—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY HARPER & BROTHERS  
THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE P. F.  
COLLIER & SON COMPANY

THE SPRING FLIGHT—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE McCALL  
COMPANY

THE LETTER—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE INTERNATIONAL MAGA-  
ZINE COMPANY (*Hearst's International*)

FIGHTING BLOOD—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE BUTTERICK PUB-  
LISHING COMPANY (*The Delineator Magazine*)

NOVEMBER THE NINETEENTH—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE PIC-  
TORIAL REVIEW COMPANY, UNITED STATES, GREAT  
BRITAIN AND CANADA

TIM OF BUSH VALLEY—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY STREET AND SMITH  
CORPORATION

MORE STATELY MANSIONS—COPYRIGHT 1924 BY THE CONSOL-  
IDATED MAGAZINE CORPORATION (*The Red Book Magazine*)

THE WORLD'S BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1925

—A—

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



## FOREWORD

The best mirrors of any particular period are its fiction. In the novels about the French Revolution, about the Colonial period of American history, about the settling of the West, are much more vivid pictures of life as it was in those times, of the habits and thoughts of the people, than can be gained by perusing many volumes of historical records. The creative imagination of the novelist revivifies the dust and skeletons of history. Even better and more clearly than the novel does the all too evanescent short story picture the life and thought of the times. Yet vital as the short story is to successful magazines, it is seldom that even the best short stories find permanent preservation in book form. Part of the reason lies undoubtedly in the problem of selecting the best short stories. The appeal of the short story is individual. A tale that one person may regard as compellingly entertaining to another will seem unimportant. Any anthology of current fiction made by an individual, no matter how gifted, must after all represent merely one person's opinion.

Yet there does exist in America one group of men and women—and only one group—who are fully competent to say which are the best short stories. They are the editors of the leading American magazines. It is their particular business to recognize a good short story when they see it. The success of their own careers and of the magazines they edit is dependent on their ability to select short fiction that will have a wide popular appeal.

For the first time on record these editors have been called upon to act as judges of the best short stories. Recognizing their pre-eminent fitness for the task, *The New York World*



invited the editors of sixteen of the leading American magazines each to name the story he personally liked best of those published in his own magazine during the year. By this method the sixteen best stories in this volume were selected. Where an editor's choice wavered between several of the stories he had published, he was permitted to name them all and the final selection was made by a group of newspaper editors headed by John O'Hara Cosgrave, and Charles E. L. Wingate.

The magazine editors whose choice is represented in this volume are: *Adventure*, Arthur Sullivan Hoffman; *American*, Merle Crowell; *Century*, Carl Van Doren; *Collier's*, Loren Palmer; *Cosmopolitan*, Ray Long; *Delineator*, Mrs. William Brown Meloney; *Everybody's*, Sewell Haggard; *Good Housekeeping*, William Frederick Bigelow; *Harper's*, Thomas B. Wells; *Hearst's International*, Ray Long; *McCall's*, Harry P. Burton; *Pictorial Review*, Arthur T. Vance; *Popular*, Charles Agnew Maclean; *Red Book*, Karl E. Harriman; *Short Stories*, Harry E. Maule; *Woman's Home Companion*, Gertrude B. Lane.

Their selections are commended to the reader with the belief that this is by far the most valuable anthology of current fiction ever made. The judges are all experts, each a specialist in knowing what his audience likes best. The magazines represented range from those of high literary standards to those of more popular appeal, covering the entire range of millions of magazine readers.

The impartiality with which the stories were chosen—the individual editor's opinion being the only guide—is evidenced by the fact that some of the tales are by authors hardly known to the public. Others are by celebrated authors.

This volume then is not a book of stories by best authors, but of the best stories published in a year in America and as it is in this country that the best short fiction is published, they may well be called THE WORLD'S BEST STORIES—a collection of fine present-day fiction well worth a permanent place in every library.

Literary aspirants, too, will find this book, of special



value, for it forms an authoritative guide to the kind of fiction that appeals most strongly to each of the magazine editors.

WILLIAM JOHNSTON.

Office of *The World*,  
New York City.

Acknowledgment is made to Doubleday Page & Company and to Minton, Balch & Company for permission to reprint *The Spring Flight* and *The Most Dangerous Game* which have appeared respectively in "O. Henry Prize Stories of 1924" published by Doubleday Page & Company and in "Variety" by Richard Connell, published by Minton, Balch & Company.







# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	v
WILLIAM JOHNSTON	
CHAPTER	
I LITTLE FRAÜLEIN AND THE BIG WORLD	13
I. A. R. WYLIE <i>Good Housekeeping</i>	
II STANDING ROOM ONLY	42
IRVIN S. COBB <i>Cosmopolitan</i>	
III SHACKLES OF SERVICE	66
MEIGS O. FROST <i>Short Stories</i>	
IV ROMANCE AND SALLY BYRD	91
ELLEN GLASGOW <i>Woman's Home Companion</i>	
V THE PRIMITIVE METHOD	118
F. R. BUCKLEY <i>Adventure</i>	
VI THE DANCER OF PARIS	130
MICHAEL ARLEN <i>Everybody's</i>	
VII WILD BILL McCORKLE	152
SAMUEL A. DERIEUX <i>American</i>	
VIII THE BIOGRAPHY OF BLADE	173
ZONA GALE <i>Century</i>	
IX LOUTRÉ	178
LISA YSAYE TARLEAU <i>Harper's</i>	
X THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME	226
RICHARD CONNELL <i>Collier's</i>	
XI THE SPRING FLIGHT	249
INEZ HAYNES IRWIN <i>McCall's</i>	
XII THE LETTER	275
W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM <i>Hearst's International</i>	



CHAPTER		PAGE
XIII	FIGHTING BLOOD HONORÉ WILLISIE MORROW <i>Delineator</i>	312
XIV	NOVEMBER THE NINETEENTH ELSIE SINGMASTER <i>Pictorial Review</i>	331
XV	TIM OF BUSH VALLEY A. M. CHISHOLM <i>Popular</i>	347
XVI	MORE STATELY MANSIONS SAMUEL MERWIN <i>Red Book</i>	375
	BIOGRAPHICAL DATA	399



*The World's* BEST  
SHORT STORIES OF 1925







# *The World's* BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1925

## I

### Little Fräulein and the Big World

By I. A. R. WYLIE

*Selected by W. F. BIGELOW, Good Housekeeping*

## I

The street was all gray. It was difficult to believe that there were so many tones of gray in the world. The low sky and the slanting rain, the tall, dejected houses, the shining pavements, the shop-windows, and the solitary policeman were all different and yet one-colored, so that they merged into one another and made a kind of melancholy harmony.

Even the serpent was gray.

Or, rather, it was a dragon, because it had legs—any number of them—and Fräulein Gertrude auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz—this was her full name as found in Gotha's Almanach, but fortunately most people called her Trüdchen—who had been brought up on the best fairy-stories, knew that all dragons had legs of some sort. But undoubtedly from a distance it looked more like a serpent, long and sinuous and without any of that bluff and comic violence which makes dragons almost lovable.

At any rate it was a punctual creature. Every morning at nine o'clock, when Trüdchen turned into the Kaiserstrasse



—a street name that ought to have been painted out long since, but every one was too tired and worried to bother about a detail like that—there it was, and at five minutes past nine it swallowed *Fräulein auf und zu*—and-all-the-rest-of-it, whole.

She was, as it were, almost its first morsel. But today things had gone wrong. They had been going wrong for a long time—ever since she could remember. It was like a tremendous toboggan-run. You started off slowly, everybody shouting and excited. Then you began to go fast—too fast—and then you lost control, and then suddenly everything seemed to go to pieces and fly off in a hundred different directions, and you knew it was the end.

This wasn't Trüdchen's description. It was her dream. The night before, it had kept on coming back. Her blanket, which was a temperamental thing full of moods and holes, was thinner than usual, and the cold had gnawed a hollow place in her middle just like that left by a sudden swoop down in an elevator. So that probably the dream was natural enough. But it was a very tiring dream, and when the gray winter's morning had crept through the gray curtains, Trüdchen hadn't wanted to get up, and when she did get up she had found a large hole in one of her long, black woolen stockings and had begun to cry. Not loudly—hardly to notice, as you might say. The Arnstein-Prutwitzs were a very old family composed exclusively of heroes, and Trüdchen's father had worn an Iron Cross when they brought him home for the last time, and Trüdchen had learned quite early in life not to cry. But this time her mother had found her sitting on the edge of her tumbled bed, the tears trickling noiselessly down a small, white face, and the woolen stocking half off, half on, with the hole showing horribly.

Her mother had sat down beside her and held her tight. She had a letter in one hand—crunched up as though with a bitter indignation—and she, too, was trembling from head to foot.

"They don't want us, Trudi. Nobody wants us. It's all my fault, darling. I've no tact, you see. God knows what will become of us!"



And then she had caught sight of the hole and had quietly fainted.

To any one else, perhaps, it might have seemed rather absurd—fainting because of a hole in a woolen stocking. But to Trüdchen it was the only reasonable thing to do. She made no fuss about it. She just crouched down by her mother's side, stroking the pretty, faded face with its frozen look of despair, and saying "*Lieb Mütterchen*" over and over again as though it had been the refrain of a sad little lullaby. And indeed she did not want her mother to wake up. For when she did wake up, she would have to think about the hole, and the hole was quite hopeless—beyond repair. It was much nicer to go on sleeping.

But it so happened that Frau Hildebrandt, who ran the little haberdashery shop behind which they had their one room, came in and said, "*Ach, du liebe Gott!*" and picked up Frau von Arnstein in her strong arms and laid her on the bed and dashed water into her face.

"You make a cup of strong coffee, Fräulein," she commanded in her large *unteroffizier's* voice. "Quick!"

But Trüdchen couldn't. She could only stare hard into the empty cupboard. There wasn't any coffee. There wasn't anything (which was odd, when you realized that the Arnstein-Prutwitzs were such important people and that Frau von Arnstein-Prutwitz, as an officer's widow, had a pension of so many millions that Trüdchen, who was quite good at arithmetic, couldn't count them). And then suddenly she felt frightened, as she often did. She felt she couldn't bear to see her mother's white face or tell Frau Hildebrandt about the coffee. She took her mother's purse where it lay on the table, and her basket, and set out, walking very sedately, because of being so terribly afraid. But of course it was long past nine when she turned the corner of the Kaiserstrasse, and the dragon's head had disappeared into the baker's shop, and instead of being swallowed up, she became the last minute vertebra in the creature's tail.

It took no particular notice of her. The policeman who was there to keep an eye on its behavior and see that it didn't get out of hand and take up too much of the pavement



considered her dully. The two stout women immediately in front turned to look at her, and the raindrops from their umbrellas, which she had been anxiously avoiding, trickled down her neck.

"Ach, the little Prutwitz!" they said.

But they didn't smile. Nobody ever smiled at her, except by accident. You couldn't say that they looked angry either, but there was something at the back of their eyes which made you understand that if you touched them they would shrink away in spite of themselves. It was very puzzling, and though it had always been like that, Trüdchen never really got accustomed to it. She knew, of course, that she was a plain, disagreeable child. But then people looked at her mother, who was good and beautiful beyond question, in just the same way. And whereas Trüdchen was terribly ashamed and only wished people wouldn't look at her at all, her mother carried herself like a queen who had to live among inferior people. So that in all the little town they had only one friend—large Frau Hildebrandt who quarreled with every one.

The dragon moved terribly slowly. First it stood on one leg and then on another. It was very cold, and the rain sogged through the paper soles of its innumerable shoes. First Trüdchen's feet hurt, and then they didn't hurt at all. The dragon gave a wriggle, and its last minute vertebra was shaken loose. Trüdchen was left behind, her eyes wide with distress and astonishment. The policeman waved a gloved paw at her.

"Now then—move on there!"

It seemed to her that the dragon turned completely round to gaze at her, and her button nose grew redder with shame.

"Oh, please—I can't—"

"What's that—? Can't—?"

"*Ach, bitte, Herr Polizei, I've lost my feet—*"

For a minute it seemed as though every one were going to be nice. The policeman bent down, his hands on his thick thighs, and stared about solemnly as though he were really looking for something, and one of the stout women put down her basket and rubbed the spindly little legs in the darned



black stockings until they became veritable pin-cushions, so full of pins that Trüdchen couldn't stand still, but performed a jerky dance like an alarmed marionette. But it was so wonderful to have people kind to her that she didn't mind.

Then suddenly it was over. They said, "*Na, so ist recht!*" and stood back from her and stared in just the same old way. It was as though they had remembered something they had forgotten and were thinking "Serve you right! Serve you right!"

They were queer themselves. Even the policeman, who seemed so large and solid, made you feel that if any one touched him too roughly he might disappear altogether. And he knew. You could see the fear of it in his round, blue eyes, and the bristling, fair mustache was somehow very sad. The people were so big, and yet they weren't quite real. They were like shadows. The street was a shadow. Trüdchen could remember—or rather it was less a memory than a picture in a whole jumble of pictures—a place full of bustling confident people, tall men in gay uniforms, and grand-dukes and princes in carriages, and bands playing music that made your heart swell, and flags flying in the sunlight, and red-cheeked boys and girls and shops that still bulged with toys and cakes and real cream. Something had happened. It was as though winter had come forever.

The clock of the Lutheran Church at the end of the street boomed twelve. By this time there was nothing left of the dragon but Trüdchen, and the woman who had rubbed her legs and said "Tsh! Tsh!" at the hole in the black stocking. They stood together in the baker's shop, which had a flustered, devastated look as though it had been swept bare by a whirlwind, and the baker's wife whispered mysteriously:

"See what I have kept for you, Frau Gephardt!" She produced a stick of bread and three shiny brown *Bretzeln* from under the counter. "I thought to myself, '*Na*, this time the Gephardt little ones shall have a treat. It's not much they get, poor things.'"

"God knows that's true, Frau Bäckerin!"

Trüdchen stood on tiptoe. She was nearly ten, but for



some reason or other she hadn't grown much, and it was hard work getting the baker's wife even to see her.

"If you please, four little breads—"

And she held out her million-mark note pleadingly.

The baker's wife stood with her arms akimbo. She had a round, tight-skinned face that must once have been pink and jolly and wasn't any more. She was fat and pale, and you felt that if any one put a pin in her she would blow up and sink to nothing like a balloon. She had a round, hard forehead and cold blue eyes that stared down at Trüdchen with such a lack of expression that it was like hatred.

"There isn't a crumb left," she said. "Not a crumb. Tell your Frau Mutter that if the King of England wanted four little breads he couldn't have them. So there!"

She laughed, and her laugh terrified Trüdchen, because a minute before the baker's wife had been kind and smiling. So that it was she, Trüdchen, who made people feel wicked. But she couldn't move. She stood there, peering over the edge of the counter with wide open eyes and mouth, and from the other side she must have looked like a hungry, rather stupid little minnow. Obviously it was of no use to repeat, "Please—four little breads!" and equally obvious she couldn't go home without them. Whatever else had failed in the gray frightening world the "little breads" had always stood firm. When meat soared out of sight or butter melted like a dream, there were still the four daily "little breads"—two for dinner and one for supper and one (stale) for breakfast. And if you dipped them in your *Ersatz-Kaffee*, they went further and made you feel almost full.

And now they had gone like everything else.

The baker's wife said nothing. Her lips, thin and anemic, were pressed tight together. She wouldn't explain. She wouldn't hold out any hope. She wasn't sorry. She was glad. Inside herself she was saying, "Serve you right! Serve you right!" and her eyes were colorless and cold like the eyes of a dead fish.

Trüdchen turned slowly away. Her legs didn't seem to belong to her. They waggled this way and that under her dwarfed and wizened little body. They were much too long



and thin—all out of proportion, so that they made Fräulein auf und zu, with her short plaid skirt and tam o' shanter, look like one of those comic penwipers that you can make out of matches, a scrap of old duster, and a ball of wool. Only somehow she wasn't funny. Even the children in the *Gymnasium* where she went when she was strong enough, and who hated her, didn't laugh.

The woman with the basket stood in the doorway and looked back at her. She was frowning as though she were trying to make up her mind. Her mouth trembled. She might be going to smile or cry. Her face was full of kindness. Then suddenly she remembered—as every one did sooner or later. She snapped the lid of her basket, and tossed up her head, and stumped out angrily.

But Trüdchen knew that if she had been any other little girl, something wonderful would have happened.

## 2

One day Trüdchen's schoolmistress had told her class the story of Robinson Crusoe, and Trüdchen had said in her prim, grave way,

"I wish I could be wrecked on a desert island."

Every one had burst out into mocking laughter. And Trüdchen had set her teeth and sat very upright, swallowing her shame.

But in her heart she knew what she meant. She knew it was the truth. There was nothing terrible in being alone with bees and flowers and even wild beasts. But it was terrible to be alone in a world crowded with people. They might jostle you and almost knock you over, and yet they never really touched you. Wherever you went there was a barrier between you and them, and nobody ever crossed it even to scold, much less take you in their arms and pet you. On the other side they quarreled, were happy or unhappy, but at any rate they belonged to one another. You were different—it was very difficult to understand in what way, because you seemed to yourself just like everybody else—and so people hated you. When you came into a shop they



stopped complaining about the price of things and looked proud and aloof. The children in the *Gymnasium* walked away from you and played in another corner. The teachers changed their voices when they read out that you were top of the class. They couldn't hide how hard it was for them.

Sometimes it was worse than that. Sometimes in a winter's dusk, coming down on a deserted street, Trüdchen could feel how all the bitter, terrible things people hid in their hearts slipped out of their hiding-places and closed in on her. She could almost see them and their lightless, hating eyes, almost feel their hands clutching at her, tweaking at her pig-tail with cruel fingers, hear their malicious whisperings. And she walked very slowly, very upright, as though she had swallowed a poker, because she was so frightened. She knew that if she began to run, she would never stop.

It was like that today. The winter's sky hung so low and was so gray that the street was already in twilight. The fine rain had become a deluge which had swept everybody indoors. The big drops danced on the pavements like demons. It was of no use to hug the wall. They jumped into your shoes. They dragged your clothes about you in a dank, heavy weight so that you could hardly walk. They got into your glasses so that you were half blinded. From the pointed roofs that looked witch-like and wicked against the gray-yellow background, they came racing down together in cascades, shouting and burbling.

A great desolation was in Trüdchen's heart. She hadn't had any breakfast, and there wouldn't be any lunch or supper—unless Frau Hildebrandt took pity on them. She was wet through and cold, and there wouldn't be any fire. She thought of her mother's poor white face when she heard that there was no bread. Perhaps she would faint again. It must be very nice to faint and forget things.

A troop of school-children came swarming round the corner. They wore short mackintosh capes over the square satchels strapped on their backs, so that they looked hunch-backed and uncanny in the gloomy light, like unfriendly elves. Their faces were white and pinched, without laughter, as though the cold biting rain were the last endurable exaspera-



tion. They plodded on in silence, until suddenly a boy in the yellow cap of the *Tertium* caught sight of Trüdchen and raised a cry.

"*Sieh da—die Prutwitz—die Prutwitz—I!*"

She had hoped for the best. If only this time they wouldn't see her! Quite often in the summer, when the sun was shining, they would leave her alone, but when they were hungry and cold, a kind of rage got into them, and they became like a pack of hounds. With a sinking heart she saw them turn about—hesitate, and then come drifting back.

"*Ah—ha—die Prutwitz—I!*"

The terrible snigger that was always the beginning of their worst anger curled up their lips, but left their eyes cold and pitiless. They didn't look at her as though she were another child like themselves, but as though she were a strange wild beast, with curiosity and hatred. She made no attempt to escape. She stood with her back to the wall, a quaint, be-draggled figure. Her composure and prim uprightness incensed them. It looked like superiority—as though she despised them—as though they couldn't hurt her whatever they did. She was always like that—"Trüdchen-head-in-the-air" they called her—so stiff and proper and aloof. If they had seen into her wildly beating heart with its anguish of fear and loneliness, the worst of them would have slunk away. The best might have said:

"Never mind. Come on and play with us."

But if you come of a race of heroes, you keep your wretched heart to yourself.

They hadn't touched her yet. But the circle grew narrower. They began to sharpen their stubby little forefingers at her.

"Aitch! Aitch! Aitch! *Die Engländerin!*—What has the little pig of an English girl got in her basket?"

"Plenty to eat—plenty to eat—"

"All the English pigs have plenty to eat—"

"—So that good Germans starve—"

"Aitch! Aitch!"

Somebody twitched the basket out of her hand. But its emptiness did not appease them. The first act of violence



had set them free. They pinched her—pulled her hair—twisted her arms with little, mean, quick movements. And she made no resistance, but stood there patiently, keeping her eyes fixed hard on a point just above their heads. The pain was hard to bear. It was sharp and spiteful—the kind that makes you go wild with rage and hit out blindly. But what hurt her was being alone and the terrible bigness of the world.

She wanted her mother. She wanted to run to her mother and hide against her. Her mother, who was so pale and helpless, became an overshadowing, sweet figure of refuge. Only she mustn't run—and she mustn't cry. She pressed her mouth tight, and her eyes stared out round and blank through the rain-splashed glasses.

"Who killed my brother?"

"—And my father—"

"—My three brothers—"

"—Who killed her father?"

"Aitch! Aitch—!"

"—P'raps her mother did. They say—"

Suddenly the thing she had been most afraid of happened. She couldn't bear anything any more. She was like a little mad thing with a wild, white face and flying arms and legs, hitting out frenziedly, tearing, biting—not caring. At first it was all an inextricable confusion. Everybody tumbled over every one and screamed and tried to get out of the way, for now they were frightened of her. The next minute, almost, she was through. They didn't even try to pursue her. Perhaps in a sort of way they had got what they wanted. For now she was running and crying. At least, there were no tears, but the sobs tore their way out from the very bottom of her through her open, gasping mouth. And she ran and ran, quite blindly, up one street and down another, with the rain lashing her and the wind blowing her along like a wisp of straw.

But however desperate you are, you can't run to the end of the world. There isn't any end. It's round. And so sooner or later you have to come back to your own door.

Trüdchen stood outside. People passing would hardly



have seen her, she was pressed so closely against the dripping wall. She could just see through the glass top of Frau Hildebrandt's shop window, and the jumble of goods on the counter had an eerie look in the twilight. But then Trüdchen couldn't see very well. Her glasses were broken. That meant that she could never go in. Because her mother had said:

"You mustn't break your glasses, Trudi darling—not whatever you do. You see, I *couldn't* buy another pair."

And now they were broken. And there was a long, terrible tear in the sleeve of her reefer coat. Poor little mother! Trüdchen wished—she wished—she didn't dare to think what she wished.

A light sprang up. It leaped through the door between the shop and their one room and was gone again. The door had opened and closed. Trüdchen could see Frau Hildebrandt's bulky form looming down upon her. It was like fate. Nothing could stop her. Nothing. Ominous and heavy she came—and yet not unkind either. Just inevitable.

Trüdchen said aloud,

"Oh, please—please, don't!" though she knew it was no good.

The shop-door opened with a tinkle of the bell. Frau Hildebrandt looked up the street and down the street. And then she saw Trüdchen crouched against the wall, and stood back with a nod. Trüdchen crept in. But Frau Hildebrandt laid a heavy hand on her shoulder.

"*Armes Kindchen!*" she said.

She was crying.

And so Trüdchen knew that her wish had been given her and that her little mother was dead.

3

It seemed that when people are dead you forgive them everything. But it was rather difficult to understand why. What have the dead done? Perhaps the dead don't care anyway. But the living would have been so glad.

Trüdchen, in her new black dress and her black hat with



crêpe and her new black shoes and stockings, couldn't help thinking how pleased and astonished her mother would have been at her own wonderful funeral. The *Kriegsverein* sent a deputation to walk behind the coffin with a wreath, and three officers from Hauptmann von Arnstein-Prutwitz's old regiment (in brand-new uniforms with shining epaulettes) came with another wreath and an inscription,

"To the Widow of our heroic Comrade."

The Frau Bäckerin sent a tiny bunch of flowers.

Trüdchen couldn't be really unhappy, because she felt that for the first time her poor, lonely, little mother was among friends, at peace.

On the day of the funeral there came a letter from England. Trüdchen who had learned English from her mother could just read it. It was very stiff and clear. It said that of course, since her German relations would have nothing to do with her, it was necessary that Trüdchen should come to England. There was money enclosed. And would whoever was looking after Trüdchen let her grandfather, Sir Ambrose Hampden, know when and where to expect her. Although it was such a simple matter-of-fact letter, any one could have told that the writer was very bitter and unhappy about something and didn't want Trüdchen in the least.

The night before Trüdchen left for England, she and Frau Hildebrandt had a long talk about it all. Trüdchen sat up very straight and stiff at Frau Hildebrandt's table and looked through her new glasses with dry eyes. Although she was so small and poor-looking physically, she had always been top of her class, and she could think things out and understand. And she wanted to understand.

Frau Hildebrandt had been servant to Hauptmann von Arnstein-Prutwitz and his young English wife when they had first married. So she knew everything. She told Trüdchen how happy every one had been. One particular Christmas she could remember. There had been a sort of gathering of the clans. The Arnstein-Prutwitzs (auf und zu und von) had come, and the Hampdens had come, and there had been



tremendous jollifications with toasting, drinking and joking about "*Der Tag*."

"*Der Tag*" was to be Trüdchen's first birthday. But before "*Der Tag*" came they were all killing one another.

At first, the war hadn't seemed to matter so much. They wrote to one another through a neutral country, and said it was a War of Governments and that it shouldn't make any difference to individuals. Then the Hampdens' only son was killed—murdered, so her father wrote—and then one by one the Prutwitz family was wiped out, and a great, implacable bitterness spread like an ulcer. And when the young English wife wrote home, she defended her new countrymen and accused her own people, and when the old Prutwitzs came, she quarreled with them so that they never came again. She fought every one—poor, exiled, uprooted little woman, breaking her heart, until at last she had no one in the world but Trüdchen and her husband. For him, too, there was no joy left. People said he was glad of that final bullet.

All this Frau Hildebrandt told in her own way, mopping up the last drop of her *Ersatz-Kaffee* with the last fragment of a *Zwieback*. And Trüdchen watched her and thought earnestly, trying to make everything clear to herself.

"But am I really English?" she asked.

Frau Hildebrandt opened her eyes wide in horror. "*Gott bewahre!* What puts such a dreadful thought in that silly head?"

"But I must be—just a little."

"*Na*—just a little, perhaps."

"And that's why every one hates me."

"*Ach, Kindchen*, it's a bad, queer world. We poor Germans—we've suffered. The English couldn't rest until they had ruined us. God knows we are kind and easy-going. But when one is always hungry, it is difficult to forgive."

"Are all the English bad, Frau Hildebrandt?"

Frau Hildebrandt fidgeted. She was a truthful woman. It went against her principles to tell lies—even to children. "Well, God made them, *Kindchen*. He must have had His reasons. The French are worse, perhaps."

"But my mother—?"



"Ah, there now! She was a sweet soul. If only she could have been a good German! But she couldn't. Blood is blood, my dear. You can't get away from that."

"What does it mean—blood being blood, Frau Hildebrandt?"

"Eh—what? *Na*, it just means you are what you are. That's what it means."

"What am I?"

Frau Hildebrandt looked across the table. A vague alarm stirred at the bottom of her good-natured soul. She said solemnly and reassuringly:

"You are *Fräulein auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz*. You must never forget that. You must carry your head high, *Kindche'*. You must be your father's daughter—a real German little girl."

But Trüdchen sat very still. She didn't ask any more questions. It was of no use. Frau Hildebrandt wouldn't tell her the truth. She would have to find it out for herself. Even now she was beginning to understand. Because of her poor little mother there was a terrible wicked taint in her blood. So that she couldn't live any more in her own country, and her own people could never love her.

## 4

Perhaps going away was a little like dying. People were sorry. The Frau Bäckerin came to the station with Frau Hildebrandt and brought three *Bretzel*.

"Because," she said solemnly, "it is a long journey, and you will be hungry."

And she was fidgety and rather cross as though she were worried about something.

Frau Hildebrandt tied a label round Trüdchen's neck with her name and English address and felt her pockets to see that the purse and the precious passport were all safe. Without the passport, evidently, one came to a bad end. And the guard took his tip and said, "*Jawohl*," and looked at Trüdchen earnestly so that he should recognize her. She was so small that she might be easily overlooked. And then Trüd-



chen sat in her corner by the window, and the platform slid away, carrying with it two stout women, one of whom was crying. And Trüdchen would have cried, too, if she hadn't been Fräulein auf-und-zu and all the rest of it, because Frau Hildebrandt, in spite of everything, was fond of her. And that was wonderful. But instead she sat stiffly with her hands in their little black cotton gloves folded on her lap, and her mouth compressed, and cried inside. Which, as everybody knows, is so much, much worse.

The carriage was jammed tight with people. They were all strangers, and yet they were so like everybody else that Trüdchen felt she knew them—large, gray-colored people who hardly spoke, but every now and then sighed and stirred in their places like tired cattle.

The train rumbled heavily along. It didn't go very fast. It seemed jaded and reluctant like everything else. The fir-clad hills of the Black Forest dwindled till at last their black crests just peered over the horizon, as though they were saying, "Good-by—good-by, Trüdchen," and were having a last sad look at her. Then the dusk came and wiped everything out, and presently there was nothing left but a rushing darkness and the streaming torches of the station lights as they fled past. For the train was going fast now. It was desperate. It didn't care any more.

The gray people took out bags of paper and began to eat. Under the dim lamps they looked more than ever as though they were half-dead. Trüdchen couldn't eat—not even a *Bretzel*. There was a hollow place where her heart was—a terrible, dragging feeling as though something very important in her inside had been torn out and she were bleeding to death. Once she sobbed aloud, and the stout, kindly-looking man opposite her looked up from his *Butterbrötchen* in astonishment. But her eyes were dry, and she put up her hand to her mouth and said "*Verzeihung*" very solemnly so that he should think it had been a hiccough.

Every now and then the guard came in and took great bites out of her ticket. And each time he nodded to her and said,

"Na, wie geht's?"



And Trüdchen said, "Quite well, thank you."

He was a little, fair, bustling fellow with snappy, blue eyes, and Trüdchen thought how angry he would look if he knew the truth. It was terrible to think how every one would shrink away from her. She felt like a small black lie sitting there among all these sad, friendly people.

The stout man leaned forward. Something in his expression told her that the hiccough had been no good.

"Are you going a long way, little Fräulein?"

"Yes—sir."

"It must be very lonely."

"Yes."

"Haven't you any people?"

She shook her head. If only he wouldn't ask any more questions! Every one was looking at her so kindly. They saw that she was in mourning. Poor, forlorn little girl! The stout man leaned across and took the label and read aloud:

"Fräulein auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz, bei Sir Ambrose Hampden, Stanten Court, Ayrsdale, Cheshire, Holland—Dover." He looked up at her, smiling, puzzled. "All that way, *Madel*?"

"Yes."

"To England?"

They were all listening now. They had even stopped eating, with their *Butterbrötchen* half-way to their mouths, and in a minute that queer, withdrawn look would come into their faces. It was a terrible thing to be very small and belong to a family of heroes who were never afraid.

"Yes."

"Have you people there?"

And then suddenly, before she knew what she was doing, she had said in a high, squeaky voice, "My mother was English."

"Ah!—I see."

The stout man nodded and sat back. Every one went on eating. Trüdchen knew just what they felt. It was like that in class when some one had done or said something wrong. One was ashamed for them in one's very bones.



Of course, it was just chance that a few minutes later, when they slid into a big station, every one should begin to gather up their possessions. They lumbered out into the dark one after another. They didn't look at Trüdchen—except the stout man, who turned back and patted her on the shoulder.

"Poor little Fräulein," he said.

Of course—just chance. And yet it was as though they were getting up and leaving her because they couldn't bear it. Without them the carriage grew cold and filled with shadows. The whole train seemed to have died, and the guard's voice coming down the corridor had a terrifying, hollow sound.

"Passports—get your passports ready, please."

He peered in. She was so small—so blotted out in her corner—that he had to look twice before he saw her.

"I get off here. It's the French frontier. Good luck, Fräulein."

"*Danke*," she said. "*Danke schön*."

He couldn't help laughing. She was such a prim, composed little thing.

The door slammed. The train jerked forward, throwing out a long, melancholy whistle into the darkness. In a moment they would have passed over that mysterious line. Fräulein von Arnstein-Prutwitz scrambled down from her seat. She flung herself against the closed door. All the brave ancestors were forgotten. She fought with the stiff handle that wouldn't yield.

"Oh, please—please let me out—let me go home!"

She didn't know what home meant.

A French official opened the door. He stared down at her. She looked queer enough in the dingy half-light—a comic child's figure with a crêpe hat over one ear and a dead-white face and round eyes behind round spectacles.

"Passports, please."

She gave him hers. He looked at it, comparing the photograph with the original. Ugly little German brat! He gave it back to her with a malicious ceremonious touch to his képi.

"*Merci, Mademoiselle*."



She stood there in the middle of the carriage, very still, very upright, swallowing her gasps.

At least, she was glad that she hadn't really cried.

## 5

Monsieur Jules Leforges, member of the French Senate, got in at the next station. He had no idea that anything particular was going to happen to him. He arranged his traps, spread his overcoat over his knees, and folded his gloved hands over his newspaper with the air of an experienced traveler settling himself down to a comfortable journey. At first sight he looked an easy-going, genial gentleman, rather stout, with a full, gray-bearded face and sparkling blue eyes, deep-set. But at second sight one wasn't so sure. The broad shoulders were held aggressively, the mouth was tightly closed, and the eyes had a harsh, fierce stare in them even when he smiled. One plump hand was a neat replica of its companion, except that it wasn't flexible. It wasn't real.

Monsieur Leforges glanced round him, as a traveler will, to see who his fellow travelers are and whether they are likely to annoy him. He saw a little girl in the far corner by the window. He saw her, but he really couldn't be said to have noticed her. She passed in and out of his vision without reaching his consciousness, as it were. She was too small.

As to Trüdchen, she didn't see him at all. She was sitting bolt upright, with her hands clasped in her lap staring intently at nothing. So they chanced on each other.

Monsieur Leforges' secretary, a bright, smooth young man, glanced at her, too, and glanced away again. He liked children—particularly little girls—but he didn't care for this one. She was quite unattractive, almost half-witted looking. He smiled across at his employer, of whom he stood in some awe.

"Looks as though we might have the carriage to ourselves," he said. "A good ending to a good day, Monsieur."

Monsieur Leforges nodded. He settled his big shoulders



more comfortably in their corner and made a little, growling, satisfied noise in his throat. Oh, yes, it had been a good day, a satisfying day. He saw again, in his mind's eye, that afternoon's scene in the *Rathaus*. He could congratulate himself. As the representative of the Republic he had behaved with dignity and restraint. No venom, no anger, none of your blustering, brutal Prussianism. He had shown them how a Frenchman behaves to a beaten enemy. He ran his tongue over his lips, as though he were remembering a delicious wine. How the leader of the deputation—little, mean rat of a fellow—had winced and cringed under his remorseless suavity!

"You ask for milk for your children, *Messieurs*. My little son was at Rouse during your occupation. There was no milk for French children there. And so my son died. As to your invalids, I myself was prisoner for two years in one of your camps. They amputated my arm there—without anesthetics. It appears there was some temporary shortage, and your own people came first. Naturally; *Chacun à son tour, Messieurs*."

And they had withered away before him, cringing, beaten, with hollow, aghast eyes. And he had made them a little bow, perfectly courteous.

Oh, yes, that had done him good. It was like a feast after a long hunger. During those endless years of horror he had dreamed of just such a scene, rehearsing it over and over again, adding a touch here and there. As a Frenchman one had to observe the decencies. One was civilized. One used the rapier. One made elegant gestures. But one killed all the same.

Yes, very satisfying. He sighed and shifted his position. But it was like a feast that never satisfied you. You got up from the table with a kind of rage—a more terrible rage each time, so that it was difficult to restrain yourself. You saw red—you wanted to take some one by the throat. He knew that it was bad for him. It was bad for any one to be constantly frustrated. What he really wanted was to be at peace—to live in the country quietly with his wife—to keep chickens—to be a bluff and kindly fellow, loved by



every one. But he couldn't go. Not until he was satisfied. It was the War. The Germans. The swine—

"The swine!" he said aloud.

His secretary leaned toward him with a little, deprecating gesture of understanding. "That's what they are—" he said, "swine!"

Monsieur Leforges threw back his head. He talked rather loudly and emphatically, as though he were addressing a public meeting.

"There must be no sentimentalism," he said. "Sentimentalists are more dangerous than scoundrels. They knock a murderer down, and then they help him up again so that he can murder some one else. We are at least a logical people. We know what the Germans are—we have experienced them in our flesh. Any man who has seen what I have seen—!"

He gave an exclamation, bitter and ironic. There was no need to convince his secretary, and yet he felt himself driven by an odd necessity to convince some one.

"Look what they have done!" he said. He threw out his hand. With swift, dramatic sentences he painted a world in ruins. He had his race's gift for self-expression, and one saw the red horror of it all—the torture, the bestiality, the gray misery. "Let them die," he said. "Let the children die. They are a bad people. They are like rats. They breed like rats. If I find a baby rat in my house, I don't wait for it to grow up. I stamp on it."

He nodded and looked about him, strong and convinced. But there was only one other person in the carriage besides the secretary—the little girl with the absurd crêpe hat over one ear, and the black-gloved hands, and the dangling, black legs. She was looking at him, too. It was oddly disconcerting. Her eyes behind the round glasses stared as though they were looking beyond him to something else—something terrifying. Well, that was natural. He had forgotten her. He had said things unfit for a child's ears. He shrugged his shoulders in the loose-fitting overcoat, and cleared his throat, and felt for his cigar case. Then a whimsical kindness overcame him. After all, even a plain child was a child.



He bent toward her gallantly, as though she had been a grown woman.

*"Vous permettez, Mademoiselle?"*

She started violently. *"Ich verstehe nicht."*

He sat back, frowning. German—a German little girl.

*"Ah, you don't understand French?"*

*"Mais, mais oui, Monsieur."*

She continued to stare at him. Was the child an imbecile, he wondered angrily. For he was very angry—bitterly, absurdly angry. He made a sound that was meant for a laugh, and grimaced at his companion with a rudeness that he had been careful not to show to that deputation. Then he lit his cigar and smoked in silence. He went on with his thoughts. But they had lost their clarity. It was as though some one had rudely interrupted him. Besides, he was tired. It had been a satisfying but a hard day. He composed himself to sleep.

But he couldn't sleep either. Each time he opened his eyes, there was the little girl in her dim corner, like a black image of an unutterable sorrow, staring at him.

6

The train drew alongside the quay at midnight, and instantly the sleeping carriages burst into a distracted activity. The passengers leaned out of the windows and supplicated the porters, and the porters stormed along the corridors, banging the luggage against the sides and not caring in the least. Trüdchen had never seen a confusion like that. A big man in a blue-green blouse seized her *Handgepack* from her and yelled a number which she didn't hear. She was quite sure that her little bag was lost forever. Nothing would ever find itself again.

It was raining. The long, slanting lines shone in the lamplight. The platforms gleamed blackly. Men pushing great trolleys or staggering under impossible loads lurched in and out of the dripping darkness like lost souls. Every one looked pale and tired and irritable. The air was bitter and sticky with a strange scent. Trüdchen had never smelled the



sea before. It frightened her. It lay outside her there in the night like a wild beast, waiting.

People eddied fretfully. Nobody saw the little girl in black—or if they did, they did not think about her. Of course, she belonged to somebody. They jostled her and carried her along like a piece of driftwood, to the passport barrier. Every one showed his passport. It was just a friendly formality. But when Trüdchen came, the official grew more official. He read her name out, and compared it with a list, and looked at her hard, as though he were making up his mind to remember her next time. The people behind fidgeted. Every one saw that she was different.

"A baby rat!" That was what the big Frenchman had said. You put your foot on it, and the little bones went crunch-crunch. She began to shake all over. It was very cold. And she had always been so frightened of rats. This great barn-like place might be full of them. She was a baby rat herself—black, scurrying, terrified amid all these big people who hated her. And at any moment one of them might—

She slipped out of the shed on to the open quay. A wet wind swept across its terrifying emptiness and nearly blew her off her feet. She saw the sinister gleam of water, and lights that swung with a wicked magic in the black air. A ship loomed over her. She didn't think of it as a ship. It was a live thing full of bright eyes that stared malevolently. She was hustled up a narrow plank into its very jaws. She didn't know where to go. The people round her seemed to be growing bigger and bigger. They were trampling on her. She beat against them with her hands, saying, "Oh, please—please—" trying to escape. They looked down at her, half impatient. They thought she was lost and looking for some one. But there was no one for her to look for.

Then she was quite alone in the dark. She couldn't escape. A barrier high as her head stopped her short, and underneath she could hear something talking to her very softly. She couldn't quite hear what it said, but she felt that if she listened very hard, she would understand, and she didn't



want to. She put her hands to her ears and crouched down on a coil of rope, hiding.

Gradually the tumult died down. The passengers had gone to their quarters. The gangways were being withdrawn. The great ship shook itself and began to churn the water into foam. The gurgling intermittent whisper stopped and then became a hiss. They were moving. Trüdchen sat up and saw the dock lights slide away behind them. It was almost as though the land had been her home. Something inside her was being torn out.

Her teeth chattered. But she wasn't crying. Crying wouldn't ward off the horror that was creeping all around her, closer and closer. She could hear its soft, fluttering footfalls. Its myriad soft, black bodies whisked against her—rats—big rats—baby rats. Why, her father must have been a rat—a huge, horrible creature that did horrible things until at last some one had stamped on him, too. He had seemed so splendid—she had been so proud of him. Often the thought of his wonderfulness had kept her brave when she had been cold and hungry. But perhaps rats were like that. Perhaps they were proud of themselves and of each other. They didn't know how every one hated them or why—they didn't see they were different. Frau Hildebrandt and the Frau Bäckerin—they seemed like every one else—ordinary people. But you couldn't tell—you thought you were just ordinary, yourself. But you weren't—every one else knew. And they said it would have been better if you hadn't been born, so that you wouldn't grow up. They wanted to put their foot on you and crunch the life out of you, they hated you so.

The rats had hated her mother. They had hated her. There wasn't anywhere in the world where you could go—to escape—

She stood up. The ship lurched and flung her heavily against the bulwarks. She could hear the water talking to her underneath. The foam was like a white woman gliding alongside and beckoning. Perhaps her mother—

Her father and mother were dead. They were safe. When you were dead, people didn't worry about you any



more. They let you go. She remembered a mouse they had killed in their house once. Her father's *Bursche* had trapped it in the kitchen, and every one had screamed at the poor thing trembling and shrinking in its corner and said, "How disgusting—how filthy!" But when it was dead—all limp and quiet and not afraid any more—they had just picked it up and put it in the dustbin and forgotten it.

It was easy to be dead. Death was just round the corner. There was little Franz Schumacher, her classmate, who had thrown himself out of the window because he couldn't do his lessons. His teachers had been so cross and cruel to him. But afterward they were sorry. They saw how unhappy he had been. They sent wreaths to his funeral.

The small rain had soaked the crêpe hat through and through, so that it hung comically about her ears. It soaked through the thin coat to her little, starving bones. But she didn't know. She didn't even know that she was thinking vast, terrible thoughts about life and death, or that she, Gertrude auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz, was trying to find a way out from men's hatred of one another.

## 7

The crossing from the Hook to Southampton is an all-night affair, and Monsieur Leforges went straight down to his cabin. He was very tired. But before he had taken off his overcoat, he knew that he would not be able to sleep. It had been a wonderful day. But it often happened that after he had been peculiarly successful, he would toss the whole night through. Nerves, of course. It was high time he retired. Only a sense of duty kept him going. The war had deprived men of their youth and their old age, too.

"I shall go for a stroll on deck," he told his secretary, who intruded a sleek head to inquire after his well-being. "The fresh air will quiet me down."

The deck was deserted. The wind swept it with an invisible broom. You could see the water scudding before it. The ship pitched heavily, and the stern lights rose and fell like the tail of a seesaw. Monsieur Leforges was an old sea-



dog. He liked a storm—a fight. But tonight he was too tired. He would have been glad of a little quiet.

He pulled his cap well down, dug his hands into his pockets. He had plenty to occupy his mind—there was the meeting with an English Cabinet Minister tomorrow, and the task of telling that gentleman in the suavest possible manner that he was a sentimentalist and a fool. An amusing, satisfying task well suited to Monsieur Leforges's temper. But instead he thought about his little dead son.

There wasn't anything new in that. He was always thinking about him, but in terms of a glacial, relentless passion. He wore his memory like a hair-shirt that exasperated him to fresh energy. But tonight he thought of him as himself—as the little boy he had known. He wondered what he had looked like before the end. He must have had a small, sunken white face and round, staring eyes. He must have looked at his captors and tyrants with just that expression of bewilderment and grief—not angry, but with the tragic resignation of childhood. And his captors had rattled their sabers and thought, "Starve and be damned to you, little French swine!"

Monsieur Leforges walked up and down, up and down. He seemed to himself utterly alone on a phantom-ship steaming to an unknown destination. A wonderful day—the culmination of all his ambition. But his heart was tired—dead tired.

What had become of her—of that little girl? How she had stared at him from her dim corner! He had seen her once since then—standing on the quay, blown about by the wind and the rain like a stray wisp of unregarded life—so utterly forlorn. He had nearly spoken to her. But not quite.

Of course, she hadn't understood a word. It wasn't likely. He had talked fast and angrily. Not a clever child either—half-witted, probably, with those round, unflinching eyes that hadn't seemed to see him at all. And yet there had been a look of rather awful understanding. Well, what did it matter? He had spoken the truth.

How old was she? She was so stunted looking you couldn't tell. Eight or ten, perhaps. She and Robert might have played together. They might have played the same



games with the same toys. Children did—all over the world. There was a sort of understanding between children. Later on, something happened to them.

He stood still, staring down at the black, rolling water. He was more than tired. He was unhappy. He knew now that he was a desperately unhappy man. It seemed to him that his heart lay like an aching stone in his breast. Other people lost their children. They grew resigned. Their memories were golden and lovely. His had turned to poison. They were slowly killing him.

Oh, Robert—little Robert—

Bitter tears came into his eyes. He turned away, ashamed, and walked on. He had passed beyond the shelter of the upper deck and was battling against the full force of the wind when he saw her—

At first, he didn't believe. It was a shadow—an hallucination—a phantom among the phantoms of his brain. But his breath had stopped. Then he knew—knew with a horror of certainty that choked the cry in his throat. 'He was like a man in a nightmare. It seemed that whole minutes elapsed before he began to run. And then his feet were leaden. They stumbled and slipped. The wind pushed him back with invisible hands. It caught his voice and flung it behind him. All the time he could see her. She was climbing slowly, painfully. She might have been trying to climb over a stile. There was something so simple and innocent about her movements. Only the sea and the wind and the tossing ship were sinister. Now she was standing almost upright—like a small, fantastic figurehead against the flying darkness. She seemed to be looking intently at something far beneath her. Her glasses dropped off—he saw them fall—then her little hands went up, covering her eyes.

He never knew whether she heard him shout. He reached her. He caught the short, dripping skirt. He dragged her back, and she fell against him. A ship's lantern threw its ghostly light into their two faces, as they stared aghast at one another. For that moment they were not man and child, but two equals, considering the whole grief and pitifulness of existence.



Her hands were pressed against his chest. She said, simply, with an odd dignity, "Please—let me go—"

But he held her closer to him. He felt as though he were fighting her. He spoke in German—hardly knowing that he did so.

"Poor little girl—*armes kleines Mädchen*."

Her arms dropped. Something seemed to break in her. He could almost hear it—like the snapping of a taut wire. The next instant she was clinging to him. The little, terrible hands groped and clutched at him as though they were seeking his very heart. And she cried. He had never dreamed that a child could cry like that. He thought her whole body must be torn asunder. And Monsieur Leforges cried, too. His own heart melted in an answering anguish.

"Don't—don't—there, it's all right now. God forgive us all—"

He sat down on the dripping coil of rope. He drew her close to him under the shelter of his coat. He kissed her. All the German tendernesses he had ever heard of came to his stiff lips. He could feel how she grew quiet—listening. She was like a little bird, warming its half-dead body against his.

"Tell me—why did you—how could you—you poor baby—"

They had forgotten the wind and the rain. They were like two lovers. They clung together. They were quite alone. For a while they were silent, and then very slowly and haltingly Fräulein Gertrude von Arnstein-Prutwitz opened her heart to Monsieur Jules Leforges.

She told him about the rats—the baby rats.

And Monsieur Leforges stared into the darkness and grieved over himself and the whole world.

8

Among those who waited on the station platform was a tall, gray-haired man—military in type—who looked as though the Continental train, then curling round the bend, was bringing to him no happiness. He, too, was thinking



of his dead son and of Gertrude auf und zu und von Arnstein-Prutwitz. He was hating her. It seemed to him an ironic insult to his grief that he should have to bring into his home a child bearing that name.

But as the great train drew to a standstill, he squared his shoulders. After all, he had made up his mind. It was his duty. He had to go through with it. He wouldn't show what he felt. Anyhow, she would be in the hands of governesses—you couldn't send a child with that name to school—not yet. He himself would go abroad.

There were few passengers. No children. He stood looking about him perplexedly. A square-built foreigner stared at him and then lifted his cap. He spoke in careful English.

"Are you, by any chance, Sir Ambrose Hampden?"

The tall man bowed.

"You are awaiting your grandchild?" the Frenchman persisted.

Sir Ambrose flinched. He had never thought of Gertrude von Arnstein-Prutwitz as a grandchild. He nodded. "She doesn't seem to be here," he said coldly.

"She is here—in my charge. But first, I want a word with you."

It was all very peremptory and astonishing. But there was something about this Frenchman—something rather desperate, as though the man didn't care what happened so long as he did what he had to do. The two strangers walked up and down the platform. The Frenchman talked rapidly with a rare but expressive gesture. The English Cabinet Minister was waiting for him. That didn't matter. And then, all at once, both men stood still, facing each other. The Englishman had not so much as lifted a hand. But he had said, "Good God!" and Monsieur Leforges drew a long breath of relief.

"So you see why I had to speak to you first. After all—I have lost my son, too. But if you do not want her—say so. She shall be in his place. I cannot bear any more unhappy children."

Sir Ambrose Hampden blinked his gray eyes. "Better go and pick her up, hadn't we?" he said.



They found her sleeping in her corner.

What had he expected? Some monster of insolent hideousness? He hardly knew. At least, not this little, black, crumpled heap of broken-hearted weariness. Her hat—what was left of it—lay on the seat beside her. Her head drooped. Not beautiful in any way, but with a kind of dignity—the dignity of much sorrow. He bent over her and touched her gently. Her eyes opened. They looked at him short-sightedly, and he saw that they were his daughter's eyes—his son's eyes. His own face broke like a mask. He laid his big hand on her starved one.

"Trüdchen—" he said, "—so you've come home at last!"



## II

### Standing Room Only

By IRVIN S. COBB

*Selected by RAY LONG, Cosmopolitan*

Did you ever notice how many persons who pass you on the street in New York are talking to themselves? But did you also take note that so many of them are old men? They shuffle past, their eyes fixed on nothing in particular, which means everything in general, and their lips working to form the muttered and, to you, meaningless word. And you say, "Old party is nutty, I guess." Or, if you do not come out and say it, you think it.

If it happened in a smaller place, your unconsciously cruel diagnosis might be the correct one. In the smaller town the normal-minded individual who lives there has no valid excuse for talking to himself in public. On all sides there are others with whom he may swap the commonplaces that are the grease for the hub on which neighborhood life revolves. But have you ever stopped to think that in the big city it may be that he gossips with himself because there is nobody else for him to gossip with? Out in the country or even in the lesser city two are company and three aren't always a crowd, although the proverb would have it so, and any number up to ten or a dozen make a communal circle. But sometimes, in a city such as New York, six millions or seven only make a great loneliness greater still. It is like one of those puzzles where the more of a certain ingredient is added to a given quantity the less you have for an answer. Like the riddle of the hole in the girl's stocking for instance.

I figure it that the retired group in New York—that is,



the rank and file of it—is made up of several hundred thousand lonely old men whose feet hurt them. Mind you, I am speaking of the pedestrian class, not of those superannuated captains of business who have cars to ride in or club windows to doze in. In an emergency these last have their chauffeurs to fall back on, or the waiters. Chauffeurs and waiters get paid for listening to garrulous old gentlemen and agreeing with them.

But these other old men, now; they drift along with no special errand to take them and there is nowhere to go but out and nowhere to come but in, so they talk to themselves and we call them nutty. If all these mumbled, disconnected scraps of speech were united I'll bet you anything within reason they'd make a chorus of bitter homesickness, a wail of feeble protest against all this peopled solitude, that would be loud enough and strong enough to blast down the walls of Jericho.

Old Mr. Reuben Oldham was one of these old ones who walk by themselves and talk down their own chins just to hear the sound of their own voices. Only he didn't deal always in idle and inconsequential vaporings. There were moments when his utterances had pith and meaning in his ears. For example, there was the time when he came out of the Greek coffee-room on Second Avenue and looked over his shoulder at what was behind him and said, addressing the vast realms of space, "By Hickory Jackson, I know what's the matter. These here people ain't foreigners in my country. I'm a foreigner in their country, by Hickory Jackson. That's what's the matter!"

He went away then shaking his head—a neat withered old man who would put you in mind of an amiable box tortoise out for a stroll on its hind legs. Most humans do suggest animals or birds; probably scientists would say it either does or does not prove something about evolution. To others we suggest pigs or hawks or geese or rabbits or sheep or whatnot. But old Mr. Oldham was distinctively a turtle-looking old man, with a skinny shrunken neck which seemed always getting ready to retreat back into a stiff turned-down collar very much too large for it, and he was shrunken and



wasted in places, but quite firm and solid in other places, just as Br'er Tarrypin is.

The shell was his overcoat of stiff black diagonal that was plumply rounded at the back over the convexity of his shoulders; and his trouser-legs below the shell, being wrinkly and flabby-looking, were the two rear flippers. His face, though, with its beaky nose and its eyes set deep in loose pouches, might be rather like a turtle's, but there was nothing cruel about it. It was really a kind face, and, as you might say if you gave it a second glance, mildly bewildered.

That expression of his told no lie. He was in a state of constant bewilderment over the trick preordination had played on him. There had been a time when old Mr. Oldham had been somebody in his own right. That was when he was a younger man, although not so very much younger, at that, and lived in Tecumseh Center, which is out in Missouri. Now his home—if that is the right name for it?—was in Apartment E on the fifth floor of an apartment-house in one of the East Seventies, between Lexington and Third, which to one who knows his little old New York would place him somewhat on the less fashionable curve of that residential jelly-cake which has Fifth Avenue for its icing and Park Avenue for its top layer and Exterior Street, away over yonder by the river, for its somewhat soggy and under-done bottom crust. Its name was the Sultana Court apartments.

This then was where he lived with two others, namely, Mr. Oscar J. Tate, who was his son-in-law, and Mrs. Gussie Tate, wife of the above, who was his only child. On second thought, the foregoing assignment lacks the exact shading which makes for accuracy. Mrs. Gussie Tate was not so much Mr. Oldham's daughter as that he was Mrs. Gussie Tate's father; a distinction which easily will be understood by those who made a study of comparative relativity before Dr. Einstein took it up in a serious way.

There was nothing of the tortoise in Mrs. Gussie; she rather was of a hybrid type—part chipmunk, the rest cockatoo. She was one of those progressive, ambitious youngish women with the air of being continually trying to remember something of importance which, on being remembered, turns



out, after all, to be of no great consequence. In Tecumseh Center, as a girl, she almost had won first prize in a contest to select the prettiest girl in the county, and she had never quit running.

In New York she still was a candidate for beauty honors. She was prominent in an afternoon bridge and poker club made up of lady members whose commonest mode of conversation was shrieking. She took bridge lessons when most of her friends were still playing the old-fashioned auction-whist; she gave Mah Jong her endorsement when most of the rest only knew the game as a Chinesy name. She was the first of her set to have silver pheasants on the dining-table. She would be the first to scrap the pheasants in favor of the more fashionable and larger silver bird-dogs.

She never would be at a loss for a way to spend the long winter evenings; not so long as the movies might last or the radios endure or fifteen minutes spent at the telephone would bring enough good scouts in for a bout at ten-cent limit, one sporty round of twenty-cent roodles for every face-full, open on jacks or better. As a child she had a lisp, so now often she talked baby-talk. She was that kind; get what I mean?

If you do get what I mean and conceded further that you have a working knowledge of New York's social geology, you should be able to assign the Tates to their proper stratum. They belonged neither in the Old Brown Sandstone Period—crumbly fossil remains to be found on every uptown street—nor yet among the characteristic specimens of another era observed in the cooperative studio apartments somewhat nearer Central Park. Mrs. Tate had a little trick of saying that they lived just off Park Avenue.

As a matter of fact, the Sultana Court stood in that composite borderland where the walk-up apartment looks down on the plain tenement that has the fire-escape in front and looks up to the elevator apartment with private foyer hall for each tenant. The Tates paid twenty-two hundred a year for their apartment—which was considerably more than Mr. Oscar Tate could afford—and their foyer hall was exactly the right size to hold two callers and one umbrella vase at the same time. But there was a uniformed attendant



at the door downstairs, and the reception hall was done in Bayonne (N. J.) Italian.

Old Mr. Oldham's bedroom was the little room at the back with a window opening upon the inner court. There was a freakish sense of insecurity about his room, about the whole apartment, in fact. At intervals curious, almost imperceptible, little tremors would shake it. To account for this phenomenon there were two theories. One was that by reason of a fault in the schist, the "L" trains passing through Third Avenue one-half block to the eastward, communicated a quiver to the made soil upon which the foundations of the building rested. But the uptown tracks of the Subway ran underground only a few rods to the eastward, so some blamed it on the Subway.

Whatever the reason may have been, the fact was that about once in so often, all day long and all night long, light articles on Mr. Oldham's closet shelves would tremble the least little bit, and pictures on the back wall would swing to and fro for the fractional part of an inch. The thing got on his nerves, more or less. He had a morbid fancy, which however he expressed to no one except himself, that the restlessness of New York was crawling right up through the earth to get at him and annoy him.

Perhaps by now it has been made plain that Mr. Oldham did not care deeply for New York. Well, such was the intention. It is the main intention of this story, and not much else happens in this story. The reader who expects some mounting climax, some quirkish dénouement, has been given fair warning. He can stop right here.

Nor was there aught of a spectacular nature in Mr. Oldham's earlier history, occurring prior to the time this tale picks him up. You can pack it into a paragraph.

He clerked in a drug store in Tecumseh Center from the time he was twenty until he was nearly forty. From then on he owned the drug store; bought it with his savings. When he was sixty-three his wife died. When he was sixty-five he sold out the business at a profit—not much profit but still a profit. He traveled about some, then; went back to Peoria, Illinois, where he was born, and spent three or four



excessively boresome months there; went to California and to Florida and on a homeseekers' excursion to the Canadian Rockies.

Traveling around wasn't so exciting when you did it as when you were reading about and preparing for it beforehand. It didn't take the widower very long to find that out. So finally he came on East to live with his married daughter. Gussie and her husband suggested it themselves. They had been in New York for going on nine years and wild horses wouldn't have dragged them back to Missouri. Gussie thought her father would learn to like New York as much as they liked it; there was so much to do and always so much to see. Besides, he wouldn't be wandering about all at loose ends. So he came, on a condition which he imposed. The condition was that he pay his share of the living expenses. Every month he would hand Gussie over a hundred dollars. They accepted by wire; up until then the negotiations had been carried on, back and forth, by mail. And he packed up and came on.

He had been here nearly three years. In those three years he had learned this much, anyhow; that while there might be a great deal to see in New York, seeing it alone wasn't exactly what it had been cracked up to be. To be sure, he was not the first to make this discovery nor will he be the last to make it, by a long shot. Robinson Crusoe, on his island before Man Friday came, might have been lonesome. He should have tried Manhattan Island, that's all. It takes all kinds of people to make up New York, but Man Fridays are scarce. And if you are old-fashioned and rather shy by nature and set in your ways and come as a stranger, you are likely to remain a stranger, no matter how long you stay. That was old Mr. Reuben Oldham's fix. ✓

Long before the three years were up he had picked up that habit of talking to himself. He had found out something else about New York, too. It was the town where there was no place to loaf. And anyway, if there had been, it wouldn't have done him much good because, in his case you see, there was nobody to loaf with. To loaf properly you must have help, which means company; that is, if you



naturally are gregarious as most of us are and as old Mr. Oldham certainly was. Also, you should have a reasonably comfortable spot to loaf in.

He stood right stock still in the middle of Lexington Avenue, between the car tracks one afternoon and voiced this discovery to his customary audience of one.

"By Hickory Jackson," he said, "I'm getting onto her. She's one man's town where you can't set down and talk with the neighbors or anyhow just set and watch the neighbors pass. In the first place, there's no regular place for you to set—or if there is, I ain't been able to find it and Lord knows I've hunted high and low and down the middle. And in the second place, there ain't any neighbors—they're just all people. That's all, people."

This was a sample day out of Mr. Reuben Oldham's life in the great city where there is always so much to do. He would get up early, around six o'clock. Summer or winter, it made no difference. Getting up early was a Tecumseh Center habit which even New York couldn't cure him of. The cook and general houseworker—the Tates' two in one—would still be asleep, and Oscar, his son-in-law, didn't roll out of bed until eight on week days and not until nearly noon on Sundays; Gussie took her breakfast in bed somewhere between nine and ten.

He put on his dressing gown and his slippers and went out to the empty kitchen and lit the gas-range. He was handy at cooking. He cooked his breakfast and ate it on the zinc-covered table there in the kitchen. He prolonged both operations, the cooking and the eating, and he took his time about washing up afterwards, and after that he read the morning paper all the way through, not because everything in the paper interested but because he was thorough and also because he had such a long day ahead of him. Then he went back to his room and shaved himself very painstakingly and dressed. If the weather was fine he would be out of the apartment before any one of the other three occupants was astir.

He was back from his morning walk by eleven, usually, and generally he went to his room and stayed until lunch



time because, what with the girl tidying up the living-room and the dining-room, there was a good deal of dust and confusion. After lunch—a hurried, caught-up kind of meal which he ate alone if Gussie had gone out, or with her if she had no midday engagement—he took a nap and then he had another walk and came back and read the evening paper. But if Gussie had company in for cards or tea he read it in his room. At seven there was dinner and sometimes after dinner he went to the movies with Gussie and Oscar, provided they had no other plans. Other evenings at about half-past nine he would turn in. He wasn't much of a hand for reading books; the newspapers and an occasional magazine satisfied his literary cravings.

Evenings when there was a card game on he withdrew even earlier than nine-thirty. The jam about the poker table and the chatter and cigaret smoke and the squealing of the women and all seemed to sort of choke up the place. So he would slip away to his room, which was small without being what you would call cozy. Anyhow, he didn't seem to have much in common with these New York folks. Mentally he included Oscar and Gussie when he thought of the group collectively as New York folks. For they were quite seasoned New Yorkers; and he didn't seem to have very much in common with them, either, even though one of them was his daughter. It wasn't that they were uncivil to him or consciously selfish, either. They put themselves out sometimes on his account. He could feel it. The strain on them both when they tried to entertain him was almost a visible thing. The trouble was that the things which seemed to interest them didn't interest him so very much. It was as though they spoke a different language of a different world.

So as I was saying, often when there was no company in, and nearly always when there was, he would excuse himself early. "Well, folks," he would say, "I feel a mite drowsy. Had two good long constitucionals today and sat quite a spell over here in that little park by the river—the air must've made me sleepy. Guess I'll be turning in. Well, good night, folks. Ten minutes from now I'll be snoring my head off."



But he didn't always keep his word. Sometimes he would sit in his room for an hour or two hours before he went to bed—not reading, not doing anything particularly, but just sitting there and figuring things out and watching for the times when that recurrent little shivering sensation made light objects on his bureau quiver and the pictures on the wall pendulate a little bit.

That would be an average day for him. There is no denying it, they were long days, days that had a way of dragging. Yet these days, which passed so slowly, made up years which somehow went by swiftly. They say, though, that this is not a rare feeling among those who have passed the peaks of their lives; the years gallop by pretty fast then.

About those walks he took:

They weren't what you would call satisfying. They stretched the legs—but after you reach a certain age the legs don't appear to require a great deal of stretching—and they did keep a fellow out in the open air. But being a seagull keeps you out in the open air, too, and who in thunder wants to be a seagull?

There was so much noise, so much crowding on the avenues nearer the river, so much of a sort of cold, standoffish, leave-me-alone-and-I'll-leave-you-alone air about the avenues nearer the park. If a fellow stopped on the sidewalk to look at a pile of fruit on a stand, say, or to look at things in a show window, people bumped into him, and the boss of the store seemed to resent your standing there too long or else he came out and tried to get you to step inside so he could sell you something. It depended on whether his shop was one of the tony ones over on Park or one of the cheaper ones on Second or Third. Anyway, there wasn't a whole lot of fun in looking into windows, without you had somebody along to be sort of sociable with, you know, and argue with you over whether the things you were looking at were a bargain or not. He often remarked as much, to himself.

At first, when he didn't know the New York way of doing things, he had tried the plan of speaking to people who ranged up alongside and looked where he was looking. They would do that alright—they'd look. But if you started in



to pass the time of day with one of them, chances were he'd act suspicious and stare at you as though you were some strange kind of animal and give a grunt and pull away and leave you there. Or, if he didn't do that—if he answered you back—he'd seem to get uneasy after a minute or two as though he had it in his mind that your speaking to him out of a clear sky was the beginning of a scheme on your part to borrow money from him or pick his pocket, and then he'd mumble something about just remembering something and shy off and go on about his own business. Or else he would be one of these fresh young fellows who'd answer back with something that he thought was funny.

Then again, when something happened that was really interesting—an accident or a row or a monkey teasing a litter of young puppies in the window of a bird-and-animal store—why likely as not, about the time you worked your way into the jam to see what was going on, a policeman would be coming along and telling everybody to move on and then begin shoving people this way and then that. Not that shoving them seemed to do much good. It was like trying to drive back high water with a mop. No sooner had he cleared one spot than a fresh wave would pour back over it the very minute his back was turned. There was an awful lot of curiosity but there didn't seem to be much sympathy, if anybody was really in trouble; and as for impoliteness—stepping on your toes and shoving you out of a good place and never saying so much as “excuse me”—well, impoliteness was no name for it!

He did get acquainted with one mighty nice fellow—a policeman named McIntyre. He found out a good deal about this policeman. He was born in Brooklyn and he lived up in the Bronx and he had four children, two girls and two boys, and his oldest daughter was a trained nurse and his oldest boy was studying to be a lawyer somewhere downtown. He found these things out a scrap at a time. McIntyre was a traffic policeman on duty at a corner where there was a public school and what with keeping track of all those automobiles and trucks that came helling along, up and down and cross-ways, and what with holding the road



open so the children could get by without being run over, when school was taking in or letting out, he didn't have much time for talking with anybody.

"Well, Grandpops," he would say, "I'm glad to 'a' had a woid wit' you,"—he had a funny way of pronouncing what he said—"but don't you think you better be gettin' out of this jam before some smart guy tries to walk over you wit' his car? For this job here I need four eyes and an extra mouth. Get me?"

Still, it was a break in the monotony to have even fragmentary and broken conversation with someone who knew Mr. Oldham's name and called him by it. So far as he could tell about half the people he saw, or maybe two-thirds of them, didn't speak English at all. If they did speak it they mixed it all up with Dutch-sounding words or Eyetalian or something.

"Say, look here, Mac," he ventured one day, seeking the answer to a mystery which was puzzling him more and more as his burden of loneliness grew heavier, "ain't there a place in this whole town where a fellow that's sort of getting along in life can set down about once in a coon's age and gas for a spell and rest his face and hands, as they uster say? I don't mean at home—home's all right but you get tired of it. I mean some place where he'd be liable to meet old fellows same as him, that ain't got much to do and like to discuss things back and forth with one another."

McIntyre shook his head.

"Now you're askin' me something, Grandpops," he said. "They used to be places like that before we got Pro'biton—liquor stores—but not any more. But I take it you never was much f'r hangin' 'round liquor stores, anyways, was you, now?"

"Yes, I was, too," stated Mr. Oldham, and his eyes lit up. "Back there in Tecumseh Center—you remember that's the place I was telling you about the other day, where I uster be in the retail drug business?—I uster drop into a saloon quite frequent—Milky Hartman's place. His name was Joe but everybody called him Milky for short. Mighty clever fellow he was, too, and ran his place nice and genteel.



I never drank hard licker myself; never touched it in my life, as I remember of, unless 'twas in medicine for a bad cold or something.

"But I'd drop in there sometimes of an evening when I didn't have anything special to do, and set awhile in the back room with Milky and some other old-timey friends of mine. And they'd have beer or something stronger but I'd always take a cigar or maybe a bottle of pop or this here root beer. 'Oldham's belly-wash' they uster call it and tell me I'd drown myself some of these days, drinking that stuff. They were great hands for beer in that town. Not that any of my crowd ever got tight, to speak of. But they did get kind of talky about once in so often. But I always stuck to my belly-wash." He gave a little sigh. "I guess that old crowd's purty well busted up and scattered by now—some of 'em dead and one or two of 'em moved off, like me."

"Yes, thim days is gawn," said McIntyre; "gawn in your old town and gawn in this town, too. I miss them meself of an evenin' off post. I'm doubtful of this homemade hootch. And the hard stuff the bootleggers peddle is worse. Well, you might try settin' in the Park, thin? God knows me own feet ache sometimes till I'd be willin' to set on the bare earth, I would that. Cit'zens don't know the strain that's on a fella's feet after he gets on the cops."

Mr. Oldham had tried the parks—Central Park and another smaller park over by the river. They weren't altogether satisfying, either. As parks go, they might be all very well; and certainly he had heard considerable praise of Central Park from persons who rarely seemed to go there themselves. Their admiration was based on the fact that there was such a noble park set down so conveniently right in the heart of New York, not upon any personal enjoyment they derived from its beauties. And those people who did use it didn't appear to have the knack of getting together.

In fair weather, and sometimes when the weather wasn't so fair, shabby men dozed on the benches along the foot-paths, or when they didn't doze they read and re-read newspapers opened usually at one of the Help Wanted pages, else they just hunched down and stared moodily at what was



directly in front of them. You rarely saw two of these brooding chaps in company; each one had his own bench or his own end of a bench.

It was the same with the better-dressed older men who came there on bright days; they nearly always were alone, too. They would look at him with timid wistful eyes and he, shuffling on by, would look back, not knowing that his eyes were timid and wistful, too; not knowing that rebuffs had made them weary of seeking chance acquaintances out of the seven millions, only knowing that many rebuffs had so worked upon him. Sweethearts did pair off; they were the exceptions. Here or there in some quiet spot a young fellow and his girl would be sitting or strolling but, of course, their eyes and their minds—and their arms—were only for each other, which was all as it should be.

There was an air of peacefulness about the big park, with its trees and its lawns and its flowers and all, but it was a misleading air. Automobiles went skyhooting past, raising dust and leaving greasy smells behind them, and threatening destruction to the squirrels that darted ahead of them across the drives; in midsummer, when the young reckless squirrels left the nests, the asphalt would be dotted with their little crushed gray carcasses. And if a fellow dropped down to soak up a little sunshine or to catch up with his breathing, children on screechy roller-skates or, what was worse, on those swift little wagons they called scooters, would be whizzing into you.

Not that Mr. Oldham minded the children. He willingly took the risk of being tripped up or of having his toes mashed. But they did make things sort of confused and rackety—there were so many of the little shavers underfoot—and they were not as friendly as they might have been. Those of them who came unattended had no time to waste on old folks; they played noisy, quarreling games among themselves. And those who had nursemaids to mind them seemed such aloof self-contained little bodies. He almost made friends once with a mighty sweet little girl, but just after he had found out that her name was Elsie and had volunteered to tell her the story of the Three Bears,



and she had snuggled up close to listen, her nurse came and gave Mr. Oldham a hostile look and hurried the child away, scolding her about something as she went.

On the whole, if a choice was to be made as between Central Park and the little park over by the river, he infinitely preferred the little park. It was such a little park that it didn't seem to have a regular name or, if it had one, Mr. Oldham never heard what the name was. It was mostly a bare rocky hillock, so that the cemented walk-ways curved into and out of knobs of stone outcrop. At the back, behind the guard-rails which were supposed to keep you off the grass, although there wasn't enough grass to brag about, a marching orphan-asylum of spindly little trees crossed the knoll single file.

In the front, looking eastward to Blackwell's Island where the workhouses were and northeastward across Bowery Bay and on up to where the Hell-Gate rocks once had been, a high stone wall ran, with the water lapping and curling at its base. Inside the wall were benches, and a fellow who had nothing much to do could kill quite a lot of time by sitting there to watch the river craft passing and the Sound steamers trading up and down. The youngsters who played here seemed friendlier, taking them by and large, than the run of the Central Park youngsters were. Or maybe they were more careless.

There was still a third advantage to be derived from visiting the little nameless park. It didn't amount to a great deal, but Mr. Oldham had reached the point where he was grateful for small favors. On the way, going and coming, he passed through a section of tenements—walk-ups, and the fire-escapes tumbling like iron cascades down their fronts, as aforesaid—and along these stretches in almost any of the cross-streets a fellow could loiter and watch the boys playing baseball—the New York brand of baseball, which is played in and out of the traffic. For a sort of game, one evening in his room, he figured up roughly how many hours he had spent watching boys play baseball. The total ran pretty high.

There was another game he occasionally played in his



room before turning in for the night. He would shut his eyes and lean back in his chair and re-create a picture of life back in Tecumseh Center in the old days. The views ran together, one merging into another—Milky Hartman's back room of a rainy night when it was nice to be indoors; the little space behind the prescription case in his drug store with this one and that one reared back in the wooden chairs and him perched up on a tall stool and the talk going, and cigar smoke and pipe smoke that thick you almost could cut it with a mixing knife; the sidewalk in front of Patterson's livery-stable, at Main and Benton, late of a summer afternoon, with the regular group of loungers on benches and boxes tilted back against the wall, all of them hitching along about once in so often so as to keep in the shade and watching the young girls out for their afternoon promenade—girls in white dresses, mostly, and bareheaded and generally paired off, who'd be going up one side of Main and back down the other, swapping words with the young bucks idling in the store doors.

Mr. Oldham always had had a keen eye for a pretty girl, especially one in a cool, summery-looking white dress; an innocent old eye but a good keen one. And business men on their ways home to supper would stop by for a few minutes with the crowd at Patterson's corner. He could breathe in hard and almost catch a reminiscent whiff of the pungent ammoniacal smell that came out of the stable. In fact, each separate vision had its own recaptured aroma—the bar-room smell, slightly stale and malty; the strong commingled smells of roots and tinctures in his drug store; the dust-smell and the heat-smell of Main Street broiling under a hot sun. A conglomerate out-doorsy smell this was, and highly typical of Tecumseh Center; and somehow, it never had grown monotonous—in the old days. And had there ever been such a town for pretty girls!

We can only guess whether or not it would have eased the ache of those homesick memories for Mr. Oldham had he known the truth about what had happened to Tecumseh Center since he came away from it. The brisk heel of progress had stepped on so many of the familiar landmarks.



His store wasn't gone exactly, but it was altered. It was a chain drugstore now, with a resident manager and a traveling efficiency expert dropping in about once in so often to ginger things up; and the fenced-off prescription department was marked "Private" and nobody entered it excepting on business.

Milky Hartman's old stand was a shoe-shine parlor, straw hats cleaned while you wait. You scarcely would be able to recognize the spot where Patterson's old red brick livery-stable used to be; the site now as glorified by an up-to-date filling station and repair garage with storage facilities in the rear behind the hip-roofed chalet. The young girls still passed, it is true, but they no longer made a panorama of their passing. Their electrics and their cars in which they rode for air, merely were parts of a swift two-way stream of traffic.

But of course Mr. Oldham didn't know about all these changes. He hadn't been back for more than three years now. Probably he wouldn't have believed you had you told him that Tecumseh Center was taking its minor pleasures, these times, and incidentally was sacrificing most of its old restfulness just as bigger towns were, on an humbler scale than the New York scale but after the same general formulas. He would have thought you were joking. Between the waves of homesickness, which hurt like a toothache, he still saw it as it had been and, to him, as always it would be—a great place for loafing and for passing the time of day with folks.

It was funny, it was so, that a fellow's point of view got switched around after he moved to New York. Now, for instance, you take these foreigners. There had been a time when Mr. Oldham had felt sort of sorry for all such as came to this country from other countries, green as grass and not knowing the United States or its ways or its language.

But now he clearly discerned that they had learned a trick which his kind did not master. They had learned how to circumvent the commingling of dullness and excitement which spiritually made New York what it was. Their tap



roots had not been broken off, as his had, when they were transplanted. Really, it wasn't as though they had left Europe and come to America; it was more as though they had brought Europe along with them. The second generation might be different, but the original immigrants somehow had succeeded in superimposing upon the local sills a colorable reproduction of the colony life they had lived in their former homes.

The thing was most marked in the evening. Walking back to the Sultana Court, Mr. Oldham would see family groups and neighborhood groups gathered in store doors—mothers and fathers and babies—or choking the entryways into tenements, or on hot nights even taking their ease out on the pavements, and all carrying on the lesser domestic and social details while insulated by an immunity of their own devising, which hedged them off from the swirling hurly of life about them. Also, for the men folks there were congenial assembly places, such as the native stocks seemed not to have the wit or the willingness to provide for themselves; club rooms and eating places that were labeled with elaborate names in Yiddish or Italian or German or Magyar or even more outlandish tongues. Once upon a time he had felt pity for these people, coming hither as strangers to a strangers' land. Now he was beginning to be envious of them.

One day, moved by a vague inquisitiveness mixed in with a gnawing desire for communion, he entered a place on Second Avenue which he had marked as one seeming to enjoy a special popularity. He went down three stone steps into a basement room full of little tables and took a seat at one of these tables. There were numbers of other patrons present, mainly dark small compact men with thick slick black hair and cow-horn mustaches. Formerly, Mr. Oldham would have catalogued them as Dagoes, that being Tecumseh Center's way of lumping any and all the peoples of southern Europe. In the light of his wider education, he knew they were Greeks.

At his entrance the burble of voices stopped. All present broke off their talking to stare at him with a querulous,



resentful fixity. He felt the embarrassment of being an interloper and an outsider and an interrupter of the racial harmony of their company.

He felt yet more embarrassed when a man-of-all-work, the owner perhaps, came promptly alongside him and asked, in difficult English and with no suggestion of hospitality in his tone, what he wished.

"I'd like a cup of coffee," said Mr. Oldham, who really hadn't wanted anything at all excepting a little taste of companionship; he was no great hand for nibbling between meals. "Coffee and maybe a drop cake or something to sort of nibble on."

The man brought the coffee in a heavy cup, slopping it down hard in front of him and then pushed a platter containing sticky, floury-looking pastries of dough and sugar at Mr. Oldham for the latter to make his choice.

"No, thank you, I wouldn't choose any of those," said Mr. Oldham. In Tecumseh Center you always said "choose" in declining food when you aimed to be especially polite at the table. "But if you've got a seed cookie, say, or—"

With a premeditated, almost a contemptuous, shrug the waiter turned his back on him and went away and thereafter, while he tarried, the man studiously ignored him. He didn't tarry long. The coffee was too strong and too dreggy for his tastes. He sucked at it, slipped a dime under the flange of the saucer and then, as an afterthought, added a nickel more for a tip and went out through a box barrage of glowering looks. It was when he reached the level of the sidewalk that he made the remark quoted several pages back about foreigners, etc., etc.

That ended his experimentations in such fields. Thereafter he undertook no more deliberate invasions of foreign parts.

Anyhow, that night at dinner when he happened to mention his adventure of the afternoon, Gussie seemed kind of fretted. She broke in on him before he had gone very far.

"I don't know why, poppa, you should want to go prowling over there in those dull, stupid old slums," she said.



"It's bad enough to have those terrible people living so close without your prowling among them. Seems to me you'd much rather take your walks on the streets where really refined people live. What's the matter with Fifth Avenue, I'd like to know? I can always find something worth looking at on Fifth Avenue."

After he had gone to his room she said to her husband:

"It looks like to me poppa is beginning to break up. Did you see what a funny far-off distracted look he gets sometimes, as though he wasn't conscious of what's going on? And here lately, passing his door I've heard him mumbling to himself. It's happened twice. And the first time I opened the door and looked in, wondering to myself who on earth he could be talking to. But it wasn't anybody, only himself. And he seems to want to be alone more than he did once. Not that I object to that—some old people are so difficult; they don't seem to be able to fit in. But he used to be a great hand for company. I'm afraid he's failing. Well, what I always say is, I hope I'm taken before I begin to get childish. I wouldn't want to live a single minute after I begin to be a care to anybody. Not that I'd ever want to give up my own father, of course!"

On a bright Sunday in early autumn, the weather and the sunshine, which had almost a summery warmth to it, lured old Mr. Oldham into making what, for him, was a considerable expedition. Guided by a sudden impulse, he got aboard a surface car, north bound. The car was not closely crowded then; he had a seat. But presently it filled up until there was only standing room in the aisle and on the platforms for late-comers. Mr. Oldham arose to give his place to a fat but sickly-looking woman, and from then on until the car had gone several miles farther, he hung to a strap in a constantly thickening press of bodies and knee-joints and elbows.

It seemed that a certain corner away up where the suburbs should have begun, if New York really had any suburbs, was the end of the run and the last stop. The conductor called "All out!" Following the rest of the passengers, Mr. Oldham got off too, and still following them, he passed



between a pair of tall gate-posts into a cemetery. He had been living among us three years, now, but this was the first time he had ever visited one of our justly-celebrated cemeteries.

He stayed on until late in the afternoon. He forgot all about luncheon. A great calm, so pleasant that it cured him of hunger, had come upon him. He had found one spot in New York where there neither was idle and aimless clamor nor vain hurryings and scurryings to and fro. The funeral processions, motor-drawn for the most part, which entered here might hasten on their way hither, might hasten again after they had withdrawn, with the now empty hearse rolling briskly on ahead. But once inside the high walls and all the while they were inside, there was a slow and solemn decorum to govern their movements.

People going along the winding paths loitered as they went, spelling off to one another the name of some impressively large mausoleum or upon the base of some particularly tall shaft. The loosed yellow leaves, dropping from the trees, seemed to spiral toward the earth very, very slowly, as though they would cover the graves gently so as not to disturb the sleepers beneath. But that, of course, was no more than a fancy; the real reason was that not enough wind stirred to toss the leaves about as they came down through the air.

With the calm a great idea came to the old turtle-looking man who had been sitting for so long on a bench where the plots climbed up and over and on beyond a gentle rise in the land. He took steps in the matter. Before he left, he had speech with a young man behind a desk in a small stone office-building near the gate. The building was modeled like a temple, but the young man was quite businesslike, oh quite!

He gave Mr. Oldham a little illustrated booklet and with it, an address where further negotiations might, if desired, be carried on.

This was the idea. Call it fantastic, call it morbid, if you want to. Still, this was it: New York had had its big joke on him; now he would have his little joke on New



York. He'd lick her at her own favorite game. He'd show her there was, anyhow, a place inside the city limits that was shut away from noise and bustle, a place where an old fellow, whose pins were sort of beginning to give out on him, could take his ease and rest his feet.

"Tubby sure, there'll be birds around, too, and plenty of nice smooth grass and trees and flower-beds and all, but I ain't thinking so much about them. I'm thinking of the quiet and the company there'll be, and the chance to do nothing but just rest and loaf for a hundred years."

He said this to himself after he started back. He was on a surface car again, with one withered hand hooked into a strap, swaying with the motion as the car sped along between the blocks, jostling against other standees when she stopped or started. This trip he had given his seat to a young woman all in black and with a baby in her arms. He went on:

"Yes, sir, first thing in the morning I'm going to that there address and see about buying a lot. I always figured that when my time came I'd be taken back and laid away beside Mother. But Mother, she'll understand same as she always did during our married life together. She won't mind. She'll know it'll just be my way of getting back at them here in this town, just my way of putting an everlasting laugh on 'em. But I won't say anything about it to Gussie and Oscar till afterwards. They might not object, seeing that the lot'll be just the same as theirs and ready for their use, if either of them should pass on. Still, they might. So I'll just keep quiet about it till the deal is closed and the deed's in my pocket. That'll be best."

The standee immediately alongside gave a derisive grunt and scrooged away. He was suspicious of these old dodoes who talked to themselves out loud on a streetcar; probably they were crazy or something. Besides, didn't he have troubles of his own?

"Tell it to somebody else," he said petulantly to Mr. Oldham; "me ears is takin' a Sunday off."

But old Mr. Oldham never got a chance to tell it to anybody else. He may have been confused or perhaps he only



was abstracted. But going to sleep with your eyes open is a mighty bad business on any one of our more populous avenues, even on a Sunday. Rather stiffly, his legs being cramped, he stepped off the rear platform after the car had halted for him at his corner, but instead of turning eastward, toward the Sultana Court, as he should have done, he turned westward, and just as he came from behind the car, another car passing uptown struck him and flung him aside and flat on his back and his hat flew off and his bare head came down with a knock against the outer rail of the south-bound track.

One of the eye-witnesses said that he saw the whole thing and it was the old fellow's fault because he didn't look where he was going. But he changed his mind after the attorney for the plaintiff got to him that evening. A second eye-witness was equally positive that the motorman of the north-bound car was to blame, for not having rung his bell and for just bulging along like as if he was going to a fire, and never caring nothing about the rights of people crossing the street. It was things like this wot made Socialists and anarchists out of people; he said so, repeatedly. And he didn't change his mind, although a special legal investigator for the traction company tried to get to him the next day.

The attorney for the plaintiff chartered a taxicab and followed the victim to the hospital. He seemed to have an understanding with the policeman and with the interne who preceded him, humped up in the back of the ambulance. Statistically speaking, the New York efficiency grades very high. There are 11,500 undisbarred lawyers in New York and 11,700 policemen, and while the figures touching on the average yearly number of street accidents show a constant increase, the gratifying fact yet remains that for each case there is, sooner or later, a policeman to make a report on it and a lawyer specializing in actionable damage claims against offending corporations or individuals.

In this case the lawyer was in evidence as quickly, almost, as the officiating policeman was, and some minutes before the ambulance arrived. He bobbed up as the crowd was forming and helped carry the injured party out of the



roadway to the sidewalk, and while en route announced his official connection with the affair. And as soon as his hands were free he produced his professional card for proof of it.

"I'm the counsel for this poor old jumpman," he said in a loud, warning voice. "I'm in charge here." Standing almost above Mr. Oldham, as though on guard over him, he took out a little notebook. "Now, let's see—how many of you ladies and jumpmen saw this here injury inflicted on my client here? I'll take the names down. I'm Counselor Pincus, practising in all the courts, so don't be afraid to speak up; and don't let this motorman here or this conductor or anybody try to bulldoze you. I'll protect you in your rights same as I'm now protecting my unfortunate client in his."

Old Mr. Oldham had nothing to say in the matter, being unconscious and breathing heavily. He was dead when they lifted him out of the ambulance. The autopsy showed extensive compound fracture of the skull, with spinal dislocation.

It seemed that Gussie had lately become very deeply interested in cremation. She hadn't said much about it but, really, cremation had appealed to her as the most sensible thing; so many prominent and cultured people had taken it up, too. Oscar agreed with her.

Her idea was that there should be a nice simple quiet service at the burial parlor over in East Sixty-ninth Street and after that a private cremation out at that lovely dignified crematory on Long Island. Then, when they got time from settling up the estate and arranging about the lawsuit against the streetcar company, she and Oscar would get on the train with the ashes and take them out to Tecumseh Center to be interred in the burying ground there. One of the beauties of cremation was that there needn't be any great hurry about it.

There wasn't. So many things kept occurring to keep them from making the trip. When she felt stronger, after recovering from the first terrible shock of it and all, and was equal to the trip, Oscar couldn't get off from his busi-



ness. And then first one thing and then another happened and they kept putting it off.

The ashes were delivered in a chaste bronze urn. It was a very small urn; Gussie was shocked by the smallness of it when the undertaker brought it. One might have thought—did one who lately has been bereft suffer one's self to think such terrible thoughts—that an incinerated cat or bird, even, might have made more ashes than a human being did.

The urn might be small but it was not unornamental. Still, naturally no matter how deeply you mourned for a departed loved one and no matter how constantly you treasured that loved one's memory, you couldn't have a thing like that around in sight where people would see it and be asking questions about it. Now, could you?

Most of the apartment-house dwellers like to move to other apartment houses about once in so often; but not so the Oscar Tates; they were different. As Gussie often said, it suited them just to get settled in a cozy nook somewhere and stay settled and not be gadding about over the country. Perhaps that helps to explain further why there were so many postponements of what necessarily would be a very sad and distressing journey back to Missouri.

When their lease expired at the Sultana Court they renewed it for three years more. Gussie kept the urn tucked away in a safe place where no one would disturb it—on the upper shelf in the closet of the spare bedroom. It was the little rear room, opening on the inner court—the room that quivered more than the front bedroom did when the "L" trains passed or the Subway trains ran through underground, or whatever happened that caused those little tremors to run up the back wall of the building.

What with this and that, the shelf where she put the urn, pushing it well into a corner behind the jamb of the closet door, was pretty well crowded; you know how odds and ends accumulate in an apartment. There just was standing room for it.



### III

## Shackles of Service

By MEIGS O. FROST

*Nominated by HARRY E. MAULE, Short Stories*

"'Tis a fine pair av hold-up men we are," grumbled Uncle Mickey Riordan, stamping his feet in the gravel in hope to get warm again. "Is that son-av-a-donkey-engine niver comin'?"

Uncle Mickey referred not to a human being, but to a locomotive—of sorts. Old Dad Adams looked at his railroad watch.

"The ol' boiler'll be along inside o' fifteen minutes sure," he soothed. "Neve' knew the ol' *Sabine* t' get behind schedule, did yo'?"

Impatiently the two tramped back and forth behind a string of flatcars loaded with lumber. Each carried a shotgun on the crook of his arm. In the side coat-pocket of each, a big red bandanna handkerchief lay loosely ready for swift adjustment over its owner's face when the moment for action arrived.

A chill wind blew over the desolate siding where they stood, chill and damp from across the Mississippi River levee that loomed in the background.

"The next time I pull anny av this Jesse James stuff," announced Uncle Mickey, "'twill be a steam-heated hold-up, I'm notifyin' ye. It's colder than an Eskimo's nose I am, Dad."

"'Tain't no colder fo' yo'n 'tis fo' me, is it?" Dad reproved him. His own shotgun barrels beneath his bare blue hand felt as though they had lain on ice for a month. But



he sped to quell any possible mutiny in his army of one, by handing over a final jolt. "Sure 'tain't yo' feet gettin' cold?" he asked.

But Uncle Mickey's wrath was all for the weather. Toward his old side-kick his calm was unmistakable.

"Annybody but you said that, Dad, I'd sure fill the seat av his pants wit' birdshot."

"Neve' did shoot nobody nowheres else, did you', Mickey?"

But it wasn't Uncle Mickey's day to be insulted. Issues too great were hanging in the balance.

"Niver did," he agreed, imperturbable. "Once I get mad enough t' shoot, I've allus scairt t'other feller till he's runnin'. No other target."

The hoarse hoot of a whistle sounded in the down-river distance.

"She's a-comin', on time like I tol' yo'," grinned Dad.

Up the rails of the Delta-Valley Railway was coming a locomotive whose run was making history. Coming with nothing but her tender rattling along behind her. And a few miles behind that locomotive was singing the Sky Rocket Special, the Delta-Valley's train de luxe. It was to permit the "Sky Rocket" to pass on her way that the history-making engine on ahead of her was crowding along under dispatcher's orders to take the desolate siding where waited these two veteran railroad men.

"Still game, Mick?" queried Dad Adams.

"Ye'll ask an Irishman that!" snorted Uncle Mickey in disgust. "Ye'll be askin' a naygur nixt will he eat chicken!"

The two of them grinned at one another. The big red bandannas were whipped from their pockets and tied in approved Wild West style across the two old faces, so that only eyes showed beneath soft felt hat brims. Up to the end of the string of lumber-laden flatcars they moved, shot-guns at the ready. Behind the barricade the two figures crouched against the moment their quarry should roll to a stop on the siding with grinding brakes, to wait till the Sky Rocket should whistle past.

"Buck" McMasters, engineer of the history-maker that



was approaching, and Jazzbo, his darky fireman, were in for the surprise of their lives.

Hours before, old Dad Adams's joints had creaked considerably as he had grabbed hand-hold and hoisted himself into the cab of the *Sabine*, the proudest job of a rejuvenated locomotive the shop gang had turned out in all its history.

But Dad hadn't admitted a single creaking joint, even to himself. His old heart, hot and bitter, had thrilled again as he settled down on the new leather of the seat at the right-hand side of the cab. His voice had been gruff with the old authority as he spoke to Uncle Mickey, his fireman, veteran and superannuated like himself. Deep down within his heart burned yet one tiny ray of hope that Hard-boiled Hank might soften to one last plea.

The pair of them looked with chill disgust on young Buck McMasters and Jazzbo, that happily whistling darky, both so utterly unimpressed, apparently, with the honor that was theirs—the honor of being named by the Powers That Be to take the *Sabine* on her last run. The two ancient relics of railroading's earlier day would gladly have booted the younger pair out of the cab, then and there.

But before them in the group of state, city and railroad officials, of camera-men waiting for the *Sabine's* departure on her classic last run—far more widely advertised than her classic first run decades before—stood Henry Burlingame, chairman of the board of the Delta-Valley. Nobody went beyond a certain point in argument against orders from him, especially in this his private show.

Not even Dad Adams. Though Dad talked of him familiarly enough in switch shanty gossip and roundhouse gabfest and around the shops where he lingered still, despite pension, and despite frequent and heartfelt supplications to go chase himself somewhere and take a rest, for the sake of various minutely specified divinities.

Dad was one of those characters you couldn't chase. You couldn't smother him in roundhouse repartee any more than you could keep him off the lot by paying him a pension. He had seen the Delta-Valley born, almost. He had



pushed its first locomotive out of Louisiana into Texas. And that locomotive had been the *Sabine*.

The *Sabine* had been the pride of the road in a day when they christened locomotives with proper names and champagne dripping from the cow-catcher, instead of numbering them like convicts, as Dad would tell you.

The Delta-Valley was his road, doggone it. The *Sabine* was his locomotive. He was going to see 'em both over the bumps, plumb through to the end.

*He* never referred to the chairman of the board as The Honorable Henry Burlingame. Not even as Mister Burlingame. Quite casually to Dad the man who occupied the Seat of the Mighty on the Delta-Valley was Hank. Yes, even Hardboiled Hank, or Hell-Roarin' Hank, in moments of affectionate remembrance.

Dog his cats, hadn't Hank stepped off the track, many's the time, with the rest of the section gang where he got his railroading start in overalls, as a proper railroad man should—hopped off the ties to let the old *Sabine* go past? Dad would tell a hammer-headed world Hank had.

Hadn't Hank quit all them millionaires and politicians and God knows what, back in New York and Washington, to come down to New Orleans and see the old *Sabine* make her last trip? There he was, wasn't he? No silk hat stuff for him, when Hank got back with the roundhouse gang. Overalls again, by gum! The old black cigar in the corner of his mug, too!

Half a dozen of those fifty-centers, rich, oily, black and odorous, were in the breastpocket of Dad's jumper now. And didn't Dad remember the time Hank couldn't afford a two-fer and used to smoke a clay cutty or a corncob fuming with the rank straight Louisiana perique with which Dad had supplied him often? Took a he-man to smoke that stuff.

Tell Dad ol' Hank wouldn't let a pair of old-timers pull out with the *Sabine* on her last trip, when it was put up to him right? Huh! Tell him the Marines wouldn't accommodate a guy wanted a fight!

No, sir! When it comes to a showdown, ol' Hank was



going to be reasonable. After they'd finished this business of photographing the *Sabine* and her original crew, the two fellows who first pushed her into Texas, he, Dad Adams, would get to Hank's ear and tell him how the old Dad-Mickey combination was there with the wallop yet! Hank always *had* held that you'd better not start something you couldn't finish. Well, Dad and Mickey were there to finish the *Sabine's* record, like they'd started it.

The disgust that the presence of Buck McMasters and Jazzbo in his cab had inspired in Dad, was wiped suddenly from his face as he leaned on the arm-rest and looked out of the cab window, proudly, as of yore. Out there in the group was young Ed Maddox—Big Ed Maddox—engineer of the 748, the huge new F-4 type fresh from the Baldwin shops, all groomed and ready for her run with the Sky Rocket Special. Good old laughing Ed Maddox, who had kidded the veteran affectionately from the day the two had met when Ed started as a wiper in the roundhouse!

Here was a chance to hand young Ed a hot one, right smack in the ribs, before the whole gang.

"Hi, Ed," squealed Dad's ancient tones, "betteh crowd that doggone flivver o' yo'n. The ol' *Sabine* don' wanta hafta wait too blame' long fo' yo', up at the sidin'!"

"I'll crowd the fliv', Dad," promised Ed with a chuckle. "Just you make 'em keep steam up in your old tin teakettle, there, so I don't have to push you into Brashear."

"Teakettle! Huh!" Dad's indignant howl rose skyward. "Too doggone bad we ain't double-tracked all the way t' Brashear, so's the *Sabine* c'd race yo'. She'd show yo' whatta real bullgine c'n do!"

Laughter rose from the massed spectators. That was proper defiance for you. Dad grinned appreciatively. Right smack in the ribs, Ed, that stuff was.

If she was a flivver, as Dad averred, 748 was some flivver. Nearby in the clangorous roundhouse she loomed, gigantic and shining amid the wreaths of river fog off the Mississippi, fog thickened here in the yards by added clouds of steam and smoke.

Close to three-quarters of a million pounds she weighed,



with her tender—the tender that chambered its four thousand gallons of fuel oil. More than eighty feet she stretched over all, to the ancient *Sabine's* forty. With her long, low-hung, undershot body, her squat smokestack and her bull's-eye of a searchlight thrust glowingly ahead, she gave you the impression of a maddened bull, massive head lowered, charging with the speed of a wolfhound as she thundered through swamp and plantation and town of the Delta-Valley's right-of-way.

Beside her the *Sabine*, brave in gold-striped black paint, with her tall, bell-mouthed smokestack, looked like some pompous little old gentleman in frock coat and high silk hat of other days. But not to Dad Adams. To him she was the glory of the past miraculously brought back to earth once more. Serene at her throttle, he smiled with kindly tolerance now at Ed Maddox, on whom, he knew, was the joke—young Ed Maddox, who in the cab of his leviathan would have to eat the *Sabine's* smoke halfway up the line to the siding, under dispatcher's orders.

"Good youngster, Ed," Dad told Uncle Mickey, approvingly. "Make a railroad man outa him, soon's he gets dry behin' the ears."

Through the thinning river fog came the light of a pale sun. The sun of the wet period of the Valley's year, when the Mississippi River, fed by a thousand streams, rises on its annual rampage. The sun of that space from January to April when all the lower Valley sees the swirling flood pour from a continent's heart down to the Gulf of Mexico between the earthen levees.

The camera-men moved forward. Groups of close-ups shifted. Hell-Roarin' Hank himself stood beside the cab and faced the salvo of clicking shutters. Striving to look natural and keep their swelling old chests within bounds, Dad Adams and Uncle Mickey Riordan took their meed of photographic fame.

The picture-taking ended. Now was the time, Dad told himself, to get busy. Now, while Hank was looking pleasant. Clambering down from the cab, the old engineer



stepped through the crowd and drew the chairman of the board aside for the last heartfelt plea.

"On the level, Hank," he begged, "Uncle Mickey an' me, we're able t' run her through. Yo' ain't forgot we done took her out on her first trip, have yo', Hank? Yo' ain't forgot that time Mickey an' me we done loaded yo' an' Pete Dunn an' Mike Dauenhauer an' Frank Parkerson an' Jim Martin on a flatcar when yo' was all down with yeller fever in that Bayou Teche construction camp, an' the ol' *Sabine* hauled yo' plumb down here t' a hospital? Yo' ain't gonna let Mickey an' me stand heah an' see a coupla young squirts take her out on her last run, are yo', Hank?"

But the Honorable Henry Burlingame was a man to hew to a line, once he had set that line.

"Sorry, Dad," he said. "Mighty sorry. I'd let you do it if I thought it was safe. But I don't. You and Mickey better come along the way we planned already. My guests, on my car they're hitching on the Sky Rocket!"

"Now listen, Hank—" began the old-timer, as he thought he saw a gleam of relenting in the big boss's eye. But the argument he contemplated starting was never made. For the chairman of the board, not wanting to hurt the feelings of so old and so faithful an employee, had bethought himself of what he deemed a happy compromise. Happy! He had kicked over the apple-cart!

"Tell you what, Dad," he broke into the beginning of the old man's plea. "If you want to, you and Uncle Mickey can ride in the cab with Buck McMasters and Jazzbo."

Ride as passengers in the cab where the pair had ruled so long! Hands off the throttle and the shovel on the *Sabine's* last trip!

"Hank," said Dad Adams, mournfully, "I didn't know you'd had a glass eye put in your face."

"Glass eye?" questioned the chairman of the board, puzzled.

"Yeh," said Dad Adams. "When I started talkin' to yo', I thought I done saw a little sympathy in one o' yo' eyes. The right one. I see it's a glass eye, now. Say—" he bristled belligerently—"yo' think Mickey an' me ain't men



enough t' take the ol' *Sabine* up t' Brashear? Huh! We're men enough t' take her away from them two Girl Scouts yo' got in her cab now, if we get our dander up!"

"Oh, come, Dad—" began the chairman of the board, starting a half-laughing, half-vexed expostulation he had no chance to finish. For the old engineer had wheeled on his heel.

"Come on, Mickey," he called to his old fireman. "Le's get outa this dam' kindergarten an' find us some grown-up men."

Side by side the two of them stalked from the yards.

In the *Sabine's* cab young Buck McMasters caught his signal to get under way. Jazzbo swung his shovel. With her old bell, brightly polished, clanging to the world its warning that here came a locomotive, the *Sabine* hooted defiantly on her tiny whistle. To the hiss of jetting steam she rolled in glory. The click of the movie cameras was drowned in the ragged cheer of farewell from the shop and roundhouse gang that had rebuilt her and sent her forth on her last trip.

But Dad Adams and Uncle Mickey Riordan were not there to see. Outside the clinker- and shell-strewn lot, they were on their way to execute the plan that had just sprung, full-panoplied, into Dad's seething old brain.

"T' hell with his pension!" Dad had exploded. "My boy's got a chicken farm where we both c'n live long's we wanta, Mickey, if he cuts us off'n the rolls. We'll show 'em! Yo' know the sidin' where they gotta wait fo' the Sky Rocket. I'll hire us an automobile. We'll cut 'cross country, an' get there ahead o' both o' them trains. Come on oveh t' my house. We'll get us a coupla my duck-huntin' shotguns. All we need 'em fo' is bluff."

So, as the *Sabine*, after she cleared the yards, started up the Valley by the winding river route, the two veterans, shotguns, hired automobile and all, were speeding on their way over the level parish roads, headed west for the siding where the old locomotive must stop to let the Sky Rocket pass. Headed west! It was the appropriate direction, for



the stuff that seethed in Dad Adams's soul was very wild and very western.

It had been Hardboiled Hank, himself, none other, to whom the *Sabine's* last trip was due.

Wall Street financiers, Interstate Commerce Commission, labor unions and state railroad commissions temporarily forgotten, he had been tramping the broad acres of Iberville Plantation that autumn, guest of his planter friend, Alan Blake, in quest of quail. And before his eyes had risen a ghost. It was a wreck of a ghost, at that, as it stood on the plantation's rusty private track. The ghost of a locomotive.

Its smokestack canted crazily. The boiler was patched and rusty. The cab was a triumph of unpainted jackleg woodwork at the hands of the plantation's darky assistant carpenter. It was roofed with ragged strips of rust-red sheet-iron, sagging out jaggedly over the edge like the frayed eaves of a swamp shack. Indifferently the forty-six by thirty-four inch firebox burned cordwood or bagasse—the crushed fibre of the sugar-cane that is left after the heavy rollers of the sugar house have extracted the precious juice. Anything to get up steam went in that firebox, from damaged hay up, or down.

"Where the devil did you get that, Alan?" asked the guest.

"You ought to know," grinned his host. "Bought it of your own railroad when somebody junked it. She's been hauling cane cars here for years. Worn out. Got to junk her myself, I guess."

A great light was breaking into the brain of Henry Burlingame, as he looked at that wheeled junk-pile.

"Junk hell!" he exclaimed. "If I can find out the bonehead who sold that locomotive without letting me know, I'll make a janitor out of him! That's the old *Sabine*, or I'm a liar."

"You're no liar," smiled Blake. "That name, the *Sabine*, was painted on her when I bought her."



Henry Burlingame had not reached his present eminence by hesitation in his mental processes.

"How much'll you take for her as she stands," he asked.

"You personally, or your railroad doing this buying?"

"Didn't I tell you last night that's the way you birds do business?" thrust the hardboiled one. "One price to a white man, another to a darky, and the biggest price of all to a railroad. I won't lie to you, though. By the great brass brake-beam, I'm buying this for the Delta-Valley, and the line is on the verge of passing around the hat. What's your price?"

"Oh, you can have it for four hundred dollars," said Blake carelessly. "It's worth about six hundred as junk."

Henry Burlingame fished in his pocket and found a coin.

"Heads I pay you six hundred. Tails I pay you three," he proposed.

"You're on!"

The coin spun. The ancient *Sabine* became again the property of the railroad in which she had spent decades of service. And the price of the transfer was three hundred dollars. Even a flipped coin had the habit of behaving for Hardboiled Hank.

The locomotive's ex-owner grinned.

"Now you got her, what're you going to do with her?"

"Why, say," quoth the chairman of the Delta-Valley board, "I used to hop off the ties with the rest of the section gang when that old girl waltzed past. She was a locomotive! The Niles folks turned her out in 1855. They don't make 'em that way any more. Yorkshire iron boiler plates and copper tubes! Lord, the work she's done! She used to haul construction material from the Berwick supply depot up to the construction forces at the front. I was a kid back in '78, when she was going strong. I remember when we loaded her and eight old flatcars on the ferry at Morgan City and landed her on Bayou Teche opposite the old Grandwood Plantation. She used to roll from there out past the old Rocohoc Pit to get the earth to build that embankment through Baker's Swamp. Old Dad Adams was her engineer, and Uncle Mickey her fireman. Never could



separate that pair. Never could get 'em on any other engine but the *Sabine*. When we built that bridge across Berwick Bay, she was the first locomotive across it. She pulled the first passenger train when we completed the line into Brashear. She pulled the first train when we pushed across the Sabine River into Texas, back in '80-something. And once when a bunch of us were down with yellow fever in a construction camp on Bayou Teche, she carried us on flatcars to the hospital. Wait till I find out who was the moron sold her without telling me!"

"Hank, that's all interesting history," said his host. "But relieve my mind. What are you going to *DO* with her, now you've got her? Nickel-plate her and use her for a watch-charm?"

The massive fist of Hardboiled Hank smote his palm. As he had talked, an idea had been born—an idea whereby he might justify seeming folly.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do with her!" he roared. "Say, out Brashear way, there's a bunch of Creoles who've forgotten how dam' happy they were when they first got a railroad. I'm going to have the gang down at the shops rebuild this baby from the ground up. We'll dress her up and let her run under her own steam from New Orleans up to Brashear, where we've given 'em a new station with a big park around it. Then we'll put her on a spur track in the park, as a monument. Let 'em look at her and remember the days when they were giving railroads land, so it would run through their dam' towns, instead of tryin' to make a railroad man walk a tight-rope over a hornet's nest while they prod the hornets."

Alan Blake grinned quizzically at his guest.

"Hank," he chuckled, "all that stuff about teaching 'em an object lesson may be true. But I know you, you sentimental old son-of-a-gun. You're buying that junk because it's as much alive to you as my old saddle-horse is to me. And that rack of bones is eating his fool head off for the rest of his natural life down in the pasture there, for just the same reason the old *Sabine's* going to rest in glory up at the Brashear station park."



"Humph!" said the Honorable Henry Burlingame. "You're as big a fool as you always were, Alan. I'll bet you ten dollars I get more quail than you, next three coveys we flush."

But he felt uncomfortable as he pocketed the ten dollars an hour later. He knew why he had changed the subject so abruptly, by making that bet. He knew that Alan Blake had put his finger on the exact reason he had bought the old *Sabine* out of her closing years of bondage. But how the devil could a man they called "Hardboiled Hank" admit a thing like that? The answer was simple. He couldn't. The only thing he could do was try not to look sheepish, and charge it up to advertising or something.

A poet in his heart of hearts was Henry Burlingame, as most real builders are. But he would have died before admitting it, as Dad Adams would have denied his creaking joints to the very death.

He looked back over his shoulder now, where the wreck rested on the rusty rails. The old engine! She would travel over the road she had traveled in the pride of youth, when boiler-plates of Yorkshire iron were untouched of rust, when copper tubes were new and shining, to rest in glory at the Brashear station park!

It took the chairman of the board to put through the four thousand-dollar repair bill the *Sabine* ran up. It was some pill to force down the throats of a directorate already cramped for money. But it went down.

You had to hand it to Hardboiled Hank. When he started out to do something, he made a good job of it.

Up past the desolate siding where the *Sabine* stood, the Sky Rocket had roared on her way west, the long line of Pullmans singing behind 748 and the brass rails of the observation platform of Henry Burlingame's car twinkling at the very end. In that car were the officials headed for Brashear to view the ceremonies when the *Sabine* arrived to be installed at her resting place in the depot park.

Through the chill air the raucous shriek of Ed Maddox's whistle had risen to salute the veteran, a tribute to the loco-



motive that once had been the Delta-Valley's pride as the steel steed that throbbed beneath him was its pride today.

The whistle of the *Sabine* had squealed in proud response. But the hand that pulled the cord was not the hand of Buck McMasters. Nor yet of Jazzbo, his fireman. It was the grip of old Dad Adams himself that acknowledged that salute. The two of the younger generation, who had taken the *Sabine* from the Algiers yards to the siding where now she stood, were seated on the sloping embankment between the locomotive and the levee, using language that it would have been the proud privilege of the roundhouse gang to hear.

For as their engine had ground to a stop, gun muzzles had covered them, voices muffled by shrouding bandannas had commanded them to climb down. And they had climbed. Then, as the hold-up men had taken over their cab, one bandanna had slipped. Before their astonished eyes appeared the face of old Dad Adams.

In language they sought relief. They needed some relief, there was no question about that. And the relief of free speech seemed all that was coming to them. For the muzzle of Uncle Mickey's shotgun held them unwavering, as he squatted, unmasked now, between cab and tender.

"Talk all ye plaze," he told them complacently. "Get it off yer chests, like bad little boys. But let it stop there, me buckos, onless ye wanta be after pickin' birdshot outa yer legs f'r a month av Sundays. Curse away. Ye can't hurrt my feelin's. I've been cursed by experts when ye were nursin' outa bottles. Talk up, childer."

They talked up. But they likewise let it stop at that. They knew too much of Uncle Mickey and his past record to think he spoke idly when the gnarled old finger of the man who had "fired" on that road in its wild, roaring construction days caressed a blue steel trigger. He was not murderous, was Uncle Mickey, but he wouldn't in the least hesitate to pepper their legs.

Up on the new leather seat at the right-hand side of the cab once more, Dad Adams ran appraising eyes over his familiar surroundings. Lovingly his hands strayed from



throttle to reverse. He eyed the gauges affectionately. Even the shotgun on the seat beside him looked natural and familiar. Many was the time in the wild and early days, when he had made the run with weapon in cab. Many the time he had used it.

"Neve' mind all that wild talk them babies is spoutin', Mickey," he called. "We're set t' roll. Jus' yo' watch 'em an' see they don' hook on behin'. Pepper 'em if they try. Hank says 'tain't safe fo' yo' an' me t' run this ol' wagon, does he! Huh! We'll show them two babies 'taint safe t' monkey with us."

Defiantly the *Sabine's* whistle tooted again. Her bell clanged warning once more. Slowly, majestically, as Dad Adams's fingers stirred to familiar tasks, she backed down the siding. Eagerly Uncle Mickey leaped down and threw the old hand switch, shotgun in hand. Out on the main line rolled the ancient locomotive. Back clanged the switch in place. Up into the cab creaked Uncle Mickey Riordan.

Then while Buck McMasters and Jazzbo cursed in one final, harmonious burst of soul-stirring profanity at the thought of the long walk or the long wait that was their choice, they saw the *Sabine* and her tiny tender gather speed and clatter on up the line toward Brashear.

"Feed her, Mickey! Feed her!" ordered Dad Adams as the rejuvenated old wagon swung on her way to the drive of her pumping pistons. Uncle Mickey's old back bent joyously to his task with clanging shovel as he attacked the four tons of coal in the tiny tender.

"We've nothin' but open track an' the Sky Rocket between us and Brashear," grinned Dad as he opened the throttle to its widest. "Let's see can we step on Ed Maddox's tail, the young squirt!"

Little it mattered to Dad that it was the *Sabine's* twelve-inch cylinders he was matching exultantly against the twenty-nine and a half-inch cylinder diameter of 748, or that the best pressure he could raise to Uncle Mickey's most frantic shoveling was a hundred and twenty-five pounds to the two hundred that was at Ed Maddox's command, or that the seventeen hundred and sixty gallons of water in his boiler



was competing with the twelve thousand gallons of the big F-4. It mattered not to him just then that the *Sabine's* tractive power was a little less than eight thousand pounds and that he was pitting it against the seventy-five thousand of the giant that roared far ahead of him. Little details like that weren't bothering Dad, in the flush of his triumph. He was crowding to the chase, and the road between the two racing locomotives and Brashear was clear. What more could anybody ask? And wasn't the big F-4 hauling the Sky Rocket while the *Sabine* was running free? Sure! His veins sang with the memories of the old days when he and the *Sabine* were masters of that road. The old sense of power was upon him.

He called to Uncle Mickey who was laboring silently.

"A race ain't over till she's over, Mick," he reminded. "Yo' got only ninety-one square feet o' firebox heatin' surface t' keep hot, boy. That feller ahead o' yo', he's got two hundred an' fifty. An' he's a oil-burnin' fool, too. But we got a real fireman in this cab. Show 'em, Mickey! Show 'em!"

There was the humorous quirk of retort suppressed, upon Uncle Mickey's lips. But he bent his knotted old back to show 'em. If they were going crazy, they might as well go the route, he grinned to himself.

"Stay with her, Mickey!" Dad encouraged him, tootling for a deserted crossing. "They think they'll have time fo' a meal an' some sleep befo' we hit Brashear. We'll show 'em, the scuts! They won't have time t' let the Pullman porter brush 'em off!"

Gloriously they charged along.

Oh, but it was joy to reach for the whistle once more on familiar crossings, to send the shrill call out over sodden fields, to wave at the little groups of country folk who had read of the event in the papers and were gathered here and there to watch the *Sabine's* last trip.

One by one the little towns and settlements, strung along an oak-dotted clay ridge behind the levee, dropped behind them. Ahead of them lay the Bienvenu trestle, and the long downward plunge over the end of the ridge and along the



embankment through the Tete Noir swamp. Cautiously Dad slowed her down and took the trestle at half-speed. The water was high about it, he noticed; the swamp was flooded well up into the underbrush as far as eye could reach.

"Ol' winteh rains raisin' hell just 'bout same's they allus did, Mickey," he observed.

He settled down into his seat, still athrill with exultation at his coup, for the long grind through the swamp and the desolate land beyond, till they came to the Gros Tete river-bridge that gave entry on more settled country, and to the final stretch of trackage leading into Brashear.

Pity the old *Sabine* wasn't hauling something besides just herself, this last trip, ran his thoughts. Done a lotta good work in her time. Might 'a' let her pull one last job. Well, you took what was handed you in this life, less'n—and here he grinned to himself—you went out and took what you wanted, like he and Mickey had done. This water sure was high, doggone if it wasn't. Lappin' up all along the embankment through the swamp. Almost through ol' Tete Noir, too. There was the open country ahead—that siding with the string of ol' construction flats on it.

The *Sabine* snorted along, the swamp streaming out behind her.

With thrusting bar Uncle Mickey was leveling the glowing bed of coal in the firebox, when he straightened up to the sound of a shrill whoop in Dad's cracked old voice.

"I'm a son-of-a-gun, Mickey. We done caught him!"

The two ancients peered through the cab windows. Sure enough, far ahead up the track, clear in the chill light of the wintry day, stood the Sky Rocket. Stood! When by all details of the schedule she should have been whooping along miles beyond that point. Plumes of smoke and steam rose from 748. The long line of Pullmans stood as still as though they were parked in the yards waiting for the cleaning gangs. Heads were craning from open vestibule doors.

"Dog my cats!" howled Dad Adams. "I done tol' Ed he better crowd that flivver o' his'n, 'f he didn' wan' t' keep



the ol' *Sabine* waitin.' Caught him this side o' Brashear, doggone his hide!"

Uncle Mickey's common sense had brought him back to where both feet were on the ground, by this time.

"Come back t' earth, ye wild ould divil," he grumbled. "Something's wrong, or ye'd niver caught a smell av her this far this side o' Brashear. 'Tis a great engine the ould *Sabine* is, Dad, but she's no flyin' machine!"

Now this was rank heresy against the olden pride of the road. But even as Dad sought for answer fittingly to crush the presumptuous one, he caught sight of a figure speeding toward them, up the track ahead. He spotted its identity, instantly. It was Jim Peterson, conductor of the Sky Rocket.

As Dad shut off his throttle and threw in his brakes, to await the arrival of the blue-clad one who sped over the ties to meet him, Uncle Mickey's voice rose beside him.

"Will ye look what's comin' up on our tail?" begged the old fireman.

Back over the track whence they had come through the swamp, the two looked keenly. They saw a gasoline-driven motor-car rushing toward them, its flanged wheels whirling as it crowded on every ounce of power at the command of its thudding motor. On it were two men. They were yet too far distant to be recognized.

"Doggone, Mickey, she looks like we're gettin' mo' an' mo' populah," said Dad.

He didn't know half how popular he was going to be, if being the focal point of interest spelled popularity.

It was Jim Peterson who reached the *Sabine* first.

"Dad!" he gasped in surprise. Surprise, for he had been one of the group in the Algiers yards when the *Sabine* rolled on her last trip. "What the triple-heated Hades *YOU* doin' here?"

"Neve' mind what am I doin' heah, Jim," husked Dad, yet irate at being blocked on his run to Brashear. "What're you doin' heah, I'm askin'? What's yo' dum-blasted alibi fo' clutterin' up the track in front of a real locomotive? Ed



Maddox run outa oil or elbow grease or somethin'? Or yo' waitin' fo' some plantation mules t' hitch on her?"

Time was when the Sky Rocket's conductor would have flared to the insult. But just now the imminence of real danger barred him from repartee.

"Listen, Dad," said he soberly, "you'll get your orders mighty soon from the division superintendent. He'll be back in a minute. Hell's busted loose. Crevasse broke through ahead of us up the line. Looks like the whole dam' Mississippi River's runnin' through the levee. Carried away Gros Tete bridge, clean, up the line a ways. Two section hands managed t' get down the track an' flagged us before we poked our noses into it. But look at the way the water's spreadin'."

The crew of the *Sabine* looked out the cab windows once more, this time their attention centered on the water of which they had been only casually conscious while their heads were filled with other matters. Sure enough, it was rising. They had seen flooded swamp and flooded lowland before, along that line. But never, now that they gave it closer scrutiny, had they seen water so high. It was lapping up around the sides of the embankment. Its brown fingers were clawing at the sloping barrier of earth in its path.

The upper part of the embankment was still far out of water, the tracks clear and open. But the Valley folk know, as no others can know, how quickly the crevasse flood, spreading out from the channel it cuts in its first rush, will make a swirling lake of level fields for miles.

"The boss'll be here in a minute, Dad," sounded Jim Peterson's voice. "He was making the run in the Burlingame private car. You know what his orders'll be, of course. We've got to get back down the line through Tete Noir swamp and get across Bienvenu trestle to that ridge."

"Looks like you're right, Jim," assented Dad.

Then the *Sabine's* cab was boarded by unannounced invaders. Up one side, where they had come back along the rails from the stalled Sky Rocket, climbed the Honorable Henry Burlingame. With him was Frank Wilkinson, division superintendent of the Delta-Valley.



If profanity as tradition has it, can turn the air blue, the cab of that ancient locomotive would have shimmered in bright azure from the moment the chairman of the board saw who sat at the *Sabine's* throttle. Hell-Roarin' Hank! He'd earned that name.

At last he grew coherent.

"What," he demanded, apoplectically, "are you two shrimp-gutted old mummies doing aboard this engine?"

"We—we—" began Dad hesitatingly.

"Where's McMasters and his fireman?" roared the Burlingame voice of battle.

"They—they had t' drop off, down the line, back a ways, Hank," stammered Dad placatingly. "So me'n Mickey, we done took her along."

Time enough to explain details later, figured Dad. Under Henry Burlingame's present belligerent and coldly inquiring eye, Dad wasn't feeling much like detailed explanations. There could be better times for explanations, he felt. All the blazing defiance of a few hours earlier had vanished, somehow, at the sight of authority in action in the field—and in emergency. It was one thing to cuss the Powers when you sat at ease in a roundhouse group. But there by the *Sabine's* throttle, the throttle he had so unprecedentedly made his own, the old railroad discipline, long dormant under retirement, clamped down on his shoulders once more.

"We'll find out about all that, later," gritted Henry Burlingame.

He turned to the division superintendent.

"Frank," he said, with the swift decision of the railroad man who had met and conquered many a problem in the field, under fire of emergency conditions, "you're the operating boss here, but you won't mind my making a suggestion, I know. Hadn't we better run the *Sabine* on the siding over there, with those construction flats, and give the Sky Rocket a clear right of way to back down through the swamp and over the trestle to the ridge? What do you think? We can make it before 39 comes along."

"You took the words out of my mouth, boss," said Wilkinson. "If we leave those passengers here on the chance of a



rescue, the Lord knows how long the Sky Rocket'll be marooned."

The division superintendent turned to Dad and Mickey.

"I don't know how the hell you got here or what the hell you're doing here in McMasters' cab," he rasped. "But now you're here, you get this damned old relic off the main line and over on that siding, and you get her there almighty quick!"

Then, as Dad reached for his reverse, the *Sabine's* cab saw yet another invasion. Up the step swung the two who had sped down the line through the swamp in that thudding motor-car.

They were Buck McMasters and Jazzbo, his fireman.

"For the love of Christopher Columbus!" opened up Henry Burlingame, launching into another volley of language at which roundhouse experts would have listened with awed admiration. "What's this? Old Home Week? What've you two prize prima donnas been doing? Drop off along the line to pick daisies? Stop to call on a girl?"

"Tell you all about that later, boss," said Buck McMasters, with a scowl at Dad Adams. "I wish that old relic was half his age and twice his weight for five minutes. But that can wait. Listen here, boss. There's a crevasse back of you as well as in front of you. There ain't anything but the pilin' left standing on Bienvenu trestle. The whole top works got torn off by heavy drift logs that down-river crevasse shot through. The Sky Rocket's caught smack between two floods. The agent at Bienvenu didn't have any way to reach you by wire before you got to Gros Tete bridge, but he figured the section hands might flag you, and he sent me along on this motor-car to tell you what they're doing back there. They've taken that construction gang off the branch line, near Bienvenu, and they're fighting to get new caps and stringers and ties on the trestle piling with some light branch-line rail on it, so you-all can back out on the ridge."

Time was pressing. But a railroad is run with some decent regard to physical facts. Henry Burlingame's jaw clamped a trifle tighter, if that was possible. The division superintendent was turning purple in the face.



"The Mississippi River's gone crazy," said the chairman of the board, with a supreme effort at control. "But it looks to me like this railroad has gone crazier. Talk quick, now. How the devil do you and your fireman come to be mucking around Bienvenu on foot?"

Once more Buck McMasters glowered at Dad Adams and Uncle Mickey. This story would stick, he knew. It made hard telling.

"These two old lunatics held us up at the siding where we ran in to let the Sky Rocket pass, back down the line," he said bitterly. "Took the *Sabine* away and ran her themselves. Me and Jazzbo, we hoofed it down the line for five miles to a section gang and borrowed their motor-car. Got to Bienvenu just when the agent was getting word about the crevasses and saw the trestle go. Then we started after you-all. No other way to reach you."

It was lunatic, as he had said. Fantastically lunatic. But there in the middle of a flooding country, caught between two crevasses, Henry Burlingame threw back his head and roared with laughter as a great light dawned upon him. For now he saw the shotgun by Dad Adams's seat.

"You two damned old dodoes took your pet engine away from these two men and—" he began. But he never finished the sentence. Dad, whose veteran railroad brain had been working automatically, cut in on the speech.

"Shoot me later, Hank, if yo' gotta, but lissen now, fo' Gawd's sake," he pleaded. "Yo' get what Buck says. Light construction rail on what pilin's left in Bienvenu trestle. Yo' cain't make it with that heavy Sky Rocket equipment. Yo' don't know how much that pilin's weakened. Lissen, Hank. See them construction flats oveh there on that sidin'? Why don' yo' let me an' Mickey hook onto 'em with the *Sabine* an' back out here on the main line. Transfer yo' passengers off'n the Sky Rocket. We'll back 'em through the swamp an' oveh the trestle t' high land. Hey? We'll be light enough t' make it, Hank. Send Buck an' Jazzbo hustlin' back on that moteh-cah t' tell 'em how quick we-all's comin'. How 'bout it, Hank? Me'n Mickey, we done run her this far. We c'n run her back."



Henry Burlingame looked at his division superintendent. "Crazy as hell, Frank," he said. "What do you think? I'm a son-of-a-gun if I don't believe it's the answer."

"Crazy is right," said that railroader. "But it's the dope. I mistrust that trestle. The *Sabine* weighs about a hundred thousand to 748's seven hundred thousand. It's about the only chance."

"Let's go, then," said Hell-Roaring Hank.

Swift orders crackled. And while the motor-car sped back through the swamp to bring the word to the construction gang laboring at Bienvenu trestle, the chairman of the Delta-Valley himself leaped down along the ties back to the Sky Rocket to help superintend the transfer of the flood-threatened passengers from their all-steel Pullmans to splintery construction flatcars, dragged by the *Sabine* from the siding where they rested in convincing proof of the Providence that looks out so often for honest railroad men.

Of the happenings of the next few hours they'll tell you yet, up and down the line of the Delta-Valley, in roundhouse and switch shanty, in construction camp and section gang.

They'll tell you of a construction crew that labored like cursing and grimy demigods at the Bienvenu trestle, under the glare of gasoline flares as the Wells' lights shone out over a swirling brown flood, while caps and stringers and piling-braces and ties were pushed farther and farther out over the naked tops of the piling that was all the rushing waters had left of the trestle in their first mad surge.

They'll tell you by what superhuman battling the light fifty-five-pound rail from the branch-line material was spiked down upon the ties in feverish fight to open a gate to safety for the Sky Rocket's passengers. They'll tell you how that crowd of passengers came bumping along a half-submerged line through Tete Noir swamp, huddled on, light construction flats pushed through a flooded landscape by a relic of a locomotive that ought to have been under glass in a museum. They'll tell you how the happy curses of the chairman of the board mingled with the triumphant whoops of an aged lunatic who sat at the throttle of that comic supplement locomotive, when the repaired trestle came into sight.



But most of all they love to tell you how, when Uncle Mickey Riordan, that sweating and overtaxed veteran, plied shovel and bar until he dropped, it was Henry Burlingame, Hell-Roaring Hank, that same chairman, who took the veteran's place, took it and held it despite the protests of Big Ed Maddox, engineer of the deserted 748, and ordered Ed to hold himself in reserve to take the throttle in case the aged lunatic cracked.

And they chuckle as they relate that the aged lunatic, never relinquishing that throttle, harried his millionaire fireman with profane encouragement. With irreverent and biting comment that now, dad-blast it, some guys were gonna understand you couldn't keep a real railroad man off'n the job while there was a job that needed real railroad men, hey?

It was a shaky and tottering trestle that awaited the *Sabine's* arrival, as she came backing through the dark with the crowded string of flatcars ahead of her. But slowly, carefully, throttled down, she pushed them over the temporary light construction that had been laid in such mad haste. Just below those fifty-five-pound rails, so pitifully light, the crevasse flood surged on its way. The structure swayed perilously beneath the weight it was called to hold.

The first flatcar made it. The second. The third. The fourth. The fifth neared land. Then, as the Sky Rocket's passengers swarmed forward and leaped off the sides to the roadbed and scrambled to safety on the ridge beyond, there came a groaning, splintering sound.

The flood-weakened piling sagged inward, outward, all ways, as a pile of nursery jackstraws sag. Under the surface of the brown flood sank the caps, the stringers, the ties and the rail that had been laid in such mad haste, with frantic, fear-spurred speed.

With them sank the *Sabine*. Brave in her panoply of black and gold, she vanished rumbling from sight, her bell-topped tall smokestack the last glimpse of her caught by human eyes.

Of that, too, they'll tell you on the Delta-Valley. Of the shouting men who scrambled down the bank with ropes, risking their own lives. Of the hoarse cheers that rose when



out of the welter of that flood were pulled Henry Burlingame and Big Ed Maddox; the chairman of the board still clutching by the collar half-strangled old Dad Adams, the engineer of 748 holding like a vise to the unconscious form of Uncle Mickey Riordan.

But above all other matters on that historic night, they speak with reverential awe of the language of the Honorable Henry Burlingame, when once the crevasse water had been pumped out of him, and the hot coffee pumped in. He spoke with the tongues of supermen and fallen angels, that night, did Hell-Roaring Hank. There are those who contend he set records in railroading profanity that will stand while locomotives roll. Listening, even the passengers, who as every railroad man knows, have little knowledge of and less sympathy for the troubles of those who trundle them across a continent, forgot their discomforts and conceded that justice had been done to a situation without precedent.

"I ought to have you two damned old pirates strung up to the nearest telegraph pole," the chairman of the Delta-Valley board concluded his little love speech.

Uncle Mickey stood silent. But Dad Adams grinned. Weakly, it is true, but none the less a grin.

"String ahead, Hank," he croaked. "Yo' got yo' gang o' young squirts with yo' t' do the stringin'. But befo' yo' staht yo' pa'ty, lemme ask yo' somethin'. Wheah'd yo' be if Mickey an' me hadn't crowded the ol' *Sabine* so she was t'other side that trestle befo' it got its uppeh-works stripped, hey? An' on the level, Hank, ain't yo' glad yo' rode a real engine on her las' trip—with a couple real railroad men?"

The Honorable Henry Burlingame, they'll tell you, never answered that question, verbally. But you'll see his answer today in a bronze plate on the frame of the steel bridge that supplanted the old *Bienvenu* trestle.

Thus it reads:

In the bayou beneath this bridge rests the *Sabine*, first locomotive of the Delta-Valley Line to make the run from Louisiana into Texas. Engineer "Dad" Adams. Fireman "Uncle Mickey" Riordan.



She rolled to glory with her old crew on the job,  
saving lives in the Twin Crevasses.

Which is as near as Hell-Roaring Hank ever came to  
making an explanation or an apology to any man.

He had worn the shackles of service too long, himself, not  
to recognize the marks they left on others.



## IV

### Romance and Sally Byrd

By ELLEN GLASGOW

*Nominated by GERTRUDE B. LANE, Woman's Home Companion*

"Never again," thought Sally Byrd Littlepage, as she opened her eyes. "Never again."

She awoke with the feeling that something delightful was about to happen, just as she used to awake on Christmas mornings in her childhood. Only her Christmas mornings were always disappointing. They had burst like bubbles when she touched them, while this dreamlike expectancy was as real as Stanley.

The name sang in her mind, as if a thrush were imprisoned there and could not get out. And not only the thrush, but the sunshine, the fragrant wind, and the blue sky filled with little clouds like mimosa blossoms—all these made a fairy ring in her thoughts where there was only dull grayness a few weeks ago.

Only three weeks ago what a dreary round life had been! Only three weeks ago she had gone plodding through the days, unaware that Stanley was in the world waiting for her. Awaking in the morning with nothing to expect, falling asleep at night with nothing to dream about. Going out after breakfast to teach in the kindergarten of the public school, coming back after lunch to wait on Grandfather or Grandmother Littlepage. Breakfast, dinner, bed, that was all. Grandfather's worry about money; Grandmother's worry about meals; Aunt Louisa's worry about neuralgia; Aunt Matilda's worry about salvation. Just that and nothing else in her days. Drabness everywhere that she



looked. Drabness and poverty and the irksome monotony of things that did not matter. And then, in the midst of the grayness, sunshine had flooded the world. She had met Stanley one day, by the strangest chance, in the library where she had gone to return a book. They had both had to wait for the librarian, and while they were waiting they had begun to talk about Shakespeare's plays. Afterward she had discovered that he was related to Gerty Cunningham, who taught in the kindergarten with her, and that he wrote plays which were so fine that she had never seen them; but it was really Shakespeare who introduced them. From beginning to end it had all been miraculous. It was one of those accidents which appear, when you look back on them in tender retrospect, to have occurred through some divine intervention in the chaos of circumstances. Nothing, she felt, except a beneficent Providence could have created so perfect an event out of the vast commonplace of existence.

Though she was only nineteen, it seemed to her that she had lived through a lifetime of drudgery before Stanley came. Even as a child she had been cramped and isolated by poverty, as if poverty were a contagious disease. They had never let her play with the other children in the streets; they had always kept her sewing with her elderly aunts in the faded drawing-room, or walking back and forth to the park with Grandfather Littlepage. In the solitude of the once fashionable and now fallen street in which they lived, there were no neighbors of their own class for them to mingle with, and mingling with "the common children" was sternly forbidden by Sally Byrd's grandparents.

Well, it was all over now. In a few minutes she would slip out of bed and bathe in water that sparkled like happiness; she would brush her dark red hair, and wind it in a wreath of plaits round her head; she would touch her glowing cheeks with the powder she had bought yesterday; she would put on her green crêpe dress and the locket with her mother's miniature; and she would go down to breakfast, with the joy in her heart shining through her gray-green eyes which Stanley once said were the color of April mist. "Why did you put on your Sunday dress?" Aunt Matilda



would ask; and, made wise by love, she would lie happily, "Oh, it's May Day, you know. There's to be a celebration in the kindergarten." Then, when breakfast was over, she would run out to meet Stanley in the park, and they would go away to be married. After that her thoughts dissolved in a rosy glow of expectancy. She thought of marriage as her Grandfather thought of great wealth or her Aunt Matilda thought of heaven, as a passive and permanent condition of bliss.

In the dining-room, which looked dark and smelt depressingly, Grandfather, a withered tree of an old man, was facing Grandmother, a withered bush of an old woman. The only difference between them was that Grandfather was very tall and thin and Grandmother was very short and thick. Both were old, tired, embittered, and drained of humanity by self-denial. They had gone so long without pleasure that they had come to regard it, even for the young, as a luxury, not a necessity.

"You are late, Sally Byrd," remarked Grandmother, pouring coffee with her trembling hands. "You will have to hurry to be in time for school."

"I know, Grandmother. I overslept myself."

"Why did you put on your Sunday dress?" inquired Aunt Matilda in her dry, crackling voice. She was a pale, long, narrow woman, whose ideas were embalmed in religion as if it were a preserving fluid. Her features had once been pretty and aristocratic, and there was a legend that she had been in love with an infidel in her youth. She suffered day and night from a sense of sin, and if possible she was a more depressing companion than Aunt Louisa, who suffered day and night from neuralgia.

"Oh, it's May Day. There's to be a celebration in the kindergarten," replied Sally Byrd, just as she had imagined. It was wonderful, she told herself, while she sprinkled sugar on her oatmeal and wished for cream, the way life went on blandly repeating one's imagination.

"Did you put the money in the ginger jar yesterday, Sally Byrd?" asked Aunt Louisa.

"Yes, I put it in." Every month she put her salary in



the green ginger jar on the mantelpiece. Aunt Louisa, who attended to the rent and the housekeeping, kept the money there because she imagined it was a place where no burglar would ever think of looking. Aunt Verbena, the ancient maid of all work, having lived in the family for forty years, had proved herself to be perfectly honest. And, besides, since she spent her working hours in dim regions below ground, it was logical to suppose that character in her place was supplemented by lack of opportunity.

"I shan't need any money," Sally Byrd was thinking. "Stanley told me not to bring anything, not even a bag. He will buy clothes for me. Prettier clothes than I have ever had in my life." Her eyes grew softer and greener, more like an April mist than ever, when she thought of the clothes Stanley would buy for her.

"Yes, I put the money in," she answered. "How is your neuralgia, Aunt Louisa?" "Never again!" sang the thrush. "Never again!"

Aunt Louisa, with the resigned smile of the neuralgic or the recently bereaved, replied in chastened tones that she was waiting for her coffee before taking a third dose of aspirin. "Matilda insisted on having air in the room last night," she said, "though she knows that I cannot stand air at night."

"I must hurry away," said the girl gayly, as she finally drew back from the table. Did they hear the excitement in her voice, she wondered, the suppressed joy?

"But you've eaten nothing, Sally Byrd," protested Grandfather, and Grandmother repeated after her habit, "eaten nothing."

"Oh, I took oatmeal, and oatmeal is so very filling, you know," replied Sally Byrd, laughing.

Then, as she turned to leave the room, her heart contracted with a spasm of pity. She saw them all caught together like mice in a trap. Perhaps in their youth, before they grew too old to struggle, they also had tried to escape into freedom.

"Good-by!" she called, waving back from the door; and



in spite of the pity through which she looked at them, the thrush in her thoughts sang eagerly, "Never again!"

As soon as she was outside of the house, she felt that she wanted to dance on the pavement. Did prisoners always feel like this on the morning they were released? How beautiful the world, the same world that she had once thought so sordid, looked to-day!

And the people she passed looked at her so pleasantly, as if, one and all, they were sharing her secret joy. That kind old man leaning on his stick at the crossing; the woman with a shawl over her head hurrying to market; the nurse in uniform on the porch of a boarding-house; the milkman swinging himself down from his wagon; the baby in the perambulator thumping the head of his Teddy bear; all these different persons gazed at her with little sympathetic smiles peeping from their eyes and the corners of their lips. Did they suspect that she was going to be married to-day? Oh, if you could only dance with your feet when you danced with your heart!

At the crossing she darted like a sparrow among the vehicles in the street. In the park, by the fountain, she knew Stanley was waiting. As soon as that laundry wagon drawn by the white horse went by, she would be able to see him. Why did it move so slowly? Would it never go on again? Yes, it was passing just as she reached the opposite pavement; and while her eyes searched the walks of the park, she caught her breath and stopped suddenly, rooted by the magic of a thought to the spot on which she was standing. Suppose he should not have come! Suppose something had happened! Suppose he had changed his mind at the last minute! For an instant it seemed to her that her blood ran cold in her veins. Her pulses flagged, and then, with a throb of delight, they began beating a jazz rhapsody. She had caught a glimpse of him by the fountain. When she entered the park, and could look under the young leaves on the trees, she could see him distinctly. He was standing there alone with his hat in his hand, and his arm on the railing. She could see his brown hair, with the gloss catching the light, where it swept back from his



forehead; the ruddy tan of his face; the easy, delightful look of his figure in the gray clothes she loved to touch. In a minute she would see his hazel eyes twinkling down on her. As soon as he caught sight of her, she knew that his face would come alive just as a dark room does when you light a lamp in it.

"Stanley!" she called softly, and ran toward him with her hands outstretched and the sunshine in her eyes.

He started as if he were jerked back from a reverie, and glanced swiftly over his shoulder, before he drew her into his arms.

"Sally Byrd, you darling!" he exclaimed as he kissed her.

She laughed with happiness. "Oh, you oughtn't to! Not here in the park."

"But there isn't a soul about. There isn't a blessed thing in sight except the sparrows, and they won't tell on us."

Of course he was right to be merry; but on a morning like this, when they were going away in secret, she felt she should have preferred him to be—well, not grave exactly, but at least serious. After all, when you came to think of it, and she had thought of nothing else for the last three weeks, marriage was a very, very serious thing. And when you married at nineteen you would have such a long time ahead either to enjoy it or to regret it.

"So you really came?"

"Didn't you know I was coming?"

"I hardly dared believe it. Did you look in the glass this morning?"

"When I did my hair. But why? Is my hat on wrong?"

"No, your hat is all right, but you've got a carnation for a face."

She laughed and drew closer to his side. Then a fat man strolled by leisurely, after the habit of the fat, and she slipped away again. "How long have you been waiting?"

"Ten minutes, and every minute was longer than the one before it."

"I know," she agreed. "It was like that all day yesterday." The fat man had sat down on a bench under a locust tree, just where he couldn't help seeing them if he



glanced up from his newspaper. Wasn't that like life! she exclaimed inwardly while she looked at him.

"Let's go on the other side," said Stanley, turning away, and she followed him obediently round the fountain. "I'd like to have a picture of you as you look this morning," he said. "I'd call it April."

How lovely of him that was! There came over her suddenly the feeling that she was living not in the actual world, but in some enchanting dream. Life was too beautiful to be real.

"I can't believe that it is going to happen," she said.

His eyes were grave as he looked at her. "It takes courage, dear. Have you courage enough?"

"Courage?" she faltered because she could not understand. "To be happy?"

"To be happy like this. A great many have tried it, and very few have succeeded. The difference is one of courage. Nothing else can take its place, not even love."

She looked at him with the eyes of youth. "I don't think I can ever be afraid of anything with you," she answered.

"Not even of me?" he asked. "I mean afraid that I might some day make you unhappy."

"But you love me."

"That is only another reason why I may hurt you." For a moment he was silent, and then he said very slowly, "Yes, I love you. I am sure that I love you." Just as if love were a thing you had to reason about, she told herself, and not a miracle which you perceived in a flash through some infallible instinct.

"Then I know you will never hurt me," she said.

He had drawn her to his side on a bench, and was holding her hands in his while he spoke. She wished now that he would be less grave, that he would take their happiness more lightly.

"If I could be sure you would never reproach me," he said.

The color ebbed from her face. "Do you mean," she asked in a small cold voice, "that you don't want to take me away with you?"



"No, no, I don't mean that." He was kissing her hands. "I want you more than ever. I am sure I want you; but I am afraid. I am afraid of the future."

"You don't know—you can't feel with all your heart and soul that you want to marry me?" Oh, if only the earth would open and let her sink through it!

He was pressing her hands to his lips. "If it were only that!" he replied, "but you know, dear, we can't be perfectly sure even of that. After all, my wife may refuse to divorce me."

For a minute after he had spoken she sat gazing at him in silence, as if she had been turned to stone by his words. Her look was still fastened to his; her hand was still pressed to his lips; but the color had died so utterly in her face that it might have been the face of a statue. Only her gray-green eyes seemed to open suddenly like a vista in a wood, and something looked out of them that he had never seen there before.

"But—but I don't understand. I didn't know you had a wife," she said in a whisper, as if she were afraid of being overheard.

At first she had felt nothing, only the stunned sensation that follows a blow; but while she answered, it seemed to her that her body became full of wires and that along these wires, which crossed and recrossed, quivers of pain, like tiny flames, were passing.

"I thought you knew. Gerty told me that you knew in the beginning. All the time I imagined you avoided speaking of her from some feeling of delicacy. So I went on blindly avoiding too."

"But I didn't understand. I didn't dream," she repeated helplessly.

"Does it make all that difference to you, Sally Byrd?"

His voice was miles away from her; it came out of the dim horizon beyond the young green leaves and the roofs and chimneys of the city. Beyond everything. Out of nothing. Strange that he should have passed so far away from her in a moment. Scarcely a moment even, only a few seconds before she had been quite close to him; and



now they were sitting side by side with an immense distance between them.

"No, it doesn't make any difference in my love. It doesn't make any difference at all in that," she heard herself saying in thin, faint tones that sounded like the far off whistle of a train. Then a sudden thought made her glance at him sharply. "Does it make any difference in hers?" she asked.

"In hers? My wife's, you mean? Oh, we got over that sort of thing long ago. We've been separated for years. But I've never asked her for a divorce," he added contritely. "I've never wanted one until now."

She collected her shattered courage with an effort, picking up, one by one, the pieces of her happiness. Then, with a tremulous gesture, she reached for her little beaded bag which she had laid on the bench, and rose to her feet. "I must be going now," she said in that small smothered voice which was so punctiliously polite, just as if she were trying to make conversation with a visitor. "I am late for school already. If I don't hurry, I'll miss the second class."

"You don't mean—you can't mean, Sally Byrd—" He was gazing at her with a distressed look in his face, and through some perverted sense of humor, he reminded her of one of the children in the kindergarten when he was denied a whirligig of colored paper. How dreadful of her to think of such things! And yet the more she tried not to think of it, the more obstinately she thought of it. A nervous feeling came over her that she was going to burst out laughing, not softly like a lady, but in a hysterical scream that would bring a crowd gathering about her.

"It—it is such a joke," she murmured; and the words gave her a shock because she had not meant to say them at all. They might as well have been spoken by the fountain, or by the fat man reading his newspaper under the locust tree, so little did they express anything that she had intended to utter. "I am going to laugh or cry in a minute," she added, "I don't in the least know which it is going to be."

"Sit down again," he said anxiously, drawing her to the bench. "You aren't fit to teach school." The hurt look



had spread all over his face, and even his clothes seemed to give way suddenly, as if he had wilted inside of them.

"No," she repeated vacantly, because it was such a relief to have some words provided for her to speak, "I am not fit to teach school."

He put his hand gently over hers. It felt, she told herself, like a hand that was asleep. "You won't let it make any difference, will you, dear?" Why did he persist in asking that question? "You won't stop loving me?"

"Oh, no," she replied, as pleasantly as she could while this confusion between laughter and tears was spinning in her mind. "I shan't stop loving you."

"Then you'll go away with me just the same?" There was a new note in his voice, which she felt rather than heard, as deaf people feel the vibration of sound. Had he grown more eager for her because he suspected that she was slipping away? How alone it made you feel to think that! Couldn't anything in the world, couldn't love even, bring two persons so close that thoughts and sensations could not come in between them?

She drew away very gently, afraid of waking the sleeping hand that covered her own. "Oh, I couldn't do that," she replied under her breath. "Of course I couldn't do that."

"You can, if you love me, Sally Byrd."

"But it has nothing to do with love. It has nothing in the world to do with love." She was eager to make him understand. "It has to do with something entirely different."

What this something was she could not have explained if he had asked her, so she was thankful in her heart that he did not ask her. She longed to go away with him. Every fiber of her being felt tight with longing; yet she knew that she should never be able to go because an instinct stronger than her longing would hold her back. No righteous indignation inspired her. She realized, almost with a shock, that she wasn't indignant at all. She was even glad and grateful that it had happened. But she couldn't go away with him unmarried. That was one of the things you didn't do, no matter how much you wanted to, like getting drunk be-



cause you were thirsty, or taking off all your clothes because you were hot. No, you might do a great many other things that were not nice; but those particular things you did not do.

"I must be going back to school," she said again, beginning to walk away. "It is awfully late."

"Then you mean this is good-by?"

Her eyes filled with tears. "You are going away by yourself?"

"I'm obliged to. I can't stay on here forever—and, besides, what is the use?"

"There isn't any use of course, but it is very nice."

"It wouldn't be if I stayed on."

"You mean you'd stop caring?"

"No, I don't mean that. In fact I don't know what I mean. I'm not very jolly myself, and I've made you unhappy."

At this she stopped and held out both hands to him. "You mustn't think that because it isn't true," she said. "You haven't made me unhappy. Compared to what I was before I knew you, I'm as happy as—a queen. You can't imagine how empty my life was before I knew you."

"But look what I've put into it."

She smiled at him through her tears. "You've put loveliness into it." Then she drew a long breath and spoke with a sob in her voice. "Oh, you can't know how much better it is to have an unhappy love in your life than to have nothing at all."

His face was softer and finer, more adorable, than she had ever seen it. "If I can ever come back to you honestly, I will come back," he promised, moved to the depths of his facile being.

"And I will never forget you. I'll wait for you always," she answered.

Smothered in summer dust, the days, weeks, months, crawled by like beetles. While school lasted, Sally Byrd taught her kindergarten with passion; when school was over, she devoted herself to her grandfather, who was beginning, as Aunt Matilda observed every morning, "to go down hill very fast." On Sundays, when Grandfather could spare



her, she assembled a group of pious-minded infants in the infant class of the Sunday school. Though she was unhappy, it was not, as she often assured herself, the forlorn, weedy, and utterly destitute form of unhappiness that Aunt Louisa, who had nothing but neuralgia to remember, was obliged to endure. No, it was the rich, bracing, romantic sorrow of Aunt Matilda, who had mourned in secret the loss of her infidel lover. Gradually, as the summer advanced, it seemed to Sally Byrd that her tragic love affair had become a tonic in her life. Lying awake through the breathless nights, when the odors of decaying fruits and vegetables crept in on the stagnant air, and the yellow moonlight looked so hot that she felt as if it would scorch her, she found that she could shut her eyes and withdraw into the memory of her hopeless love as into some secret garden of fragrance and bloom. No matter how hot and dusty and evil-smelling the street was outside, she had only to open an imaginary green wicket gate, and she was back, in the twinkle of an eye, among dew-drenched flowers. "No, as long as you have something beautiful to think about, you can't be a beggar," thought Sally Byrd, when she drooped.

Every morning Grandfather said sternly, "We must find a new way in which to economize," and Grandmother piped shrilly after him, "a new way to economize." Every morning Aunt Matilda wailed, "I feel as if I couldn't swallow a mouthful," and Aunt Louisa sighed, "If you had neuralgia, you couldn't go without eating." And every morning Sally Byrd wished for cream while she sprinkled sugar on her oatmeal!

Then, just when it seemed to her that she had got used to the monotony, she met Gerty Cunningham one afternoon in the street. All summer she had avoided Gerty, but it was impossible, she knew, not to run across her sooner or later. After school began they would be thrown together again.

"Sally Byrd, I was just coming to see you," said Gerty, clutching her arm. She was a dramatic girl, who had once yearned to act in motion pictures, and who instinctively clutched everything that came within her reach. "I was just



coming to see you, dear. I thought you might not have heard."

"Heard what?" Sally Byrd drew back a step, not that she particularly disliked clutching, but because she wanted to look at Gerty's face. It was not a face, however, when one looked at it, that told one very much except the story of Gerty's temperament.

"About Stanley. You may, of course, have seen it in the paper."

"Seen what?" She sounded awfully stupid, she knew, but why did Gerty always have to work up to situations as if she were playing them on the stage? Was it possible, she asked herself while she waited, that Stanley had got a divorce? In that instant, before Gerty answered, she felt like a drowning man who sees a hundred memories of his former life flash through his mind, only in her case the images were not memories but anticipations. She saw Stanley returning to her; she saw herself Stanley's wife; she saw them going away together; she saw the future stretching ahead, like an avenue of bliss, into a rosy haze. Then the light died as it had come, and the roseate visions faded into obscurity.

Gerty had turned away to toss a word and a smile to a passing acquaintance. "So sorry not to have been at home yesterday. Do come again soon. Yes, my dear," she had wheeled round on Sally Byrd, "I was saying to Mother only this morning that I knew you would be distressed. He always admired you so. And a writer too! Of course, that makes it worse, if anything, as Mother says, could make the worst worse. Poor Stanley! His car was struck by a train at a railroad crossing somewhere in New Jersey, and he was so badly hurt that they don't know yet whether he will live or die. And they say he will lose his eyesight even if he recovers. Think of that, dear!" It was perfectly evident that Gerty was thinking of it with personal sorrow and temperamental satisfaction. "A writer, and blind! I can't help feeling that it would have been better if he had been killed outright, like the friend who was with him."

This time Sally Byrd, not Gerty, was clutching. If she



did not hold on to something, she knew that she should not be able to stand, that she should drop straight down to the pavement and lie there without moving a finger. "Yes, I think it would have been better." The echo sounded hollow, but Gerty did not appear to notice it.

"I was sure you would want to write him a word of sympathy. He thinks you so lovely, and of course all his friends must rally about him now."

"Is it the same address? He hasn't moved, has he?"

"No, it is the same place, that beautiful apartment house in Park Avenue. Mother and I had tea with him only three weeks ago when we came down from Ogunquit. You never saw anything so artistic as his apartment, and now just to think that he may never be able to see it again."

"Are you quite, quite sure that he will be blind if he lives?" One must leave a wide margin, she was aware, for Gerty's sensational imagination.

"As soon as we read it in the paper, Mother called up over the telephone, and the nurse answered. She said they were not perfectly positive, but they feared, those were her very words, that he would never recover his sight. She seemed glad to hear that Mother was a relative, for she said he was entirely alone there except for the nurses. If it were not for school, and having spent all our money in Maine last summer, we'd go straight back to New York. But at this season of the year we are always so dreadfully hard up."

This was truth unadorned, and Sally Byrd accepted it in its simplicity. "When you write to him, tell him that I—that I am distressed as I can be," she faltered.

"Won't you write him a note yourself? I am sure he would like to hear from you. Of course I know how shocked you are. Your face is as white as your blouse."

"Yes, I'll write to him, though there doesn't seem anything in the world I can say."

"Oh, it will please him to know you are thinking of him."

Had Gerty ever suspected, she wondered, just how much she thought of him? Well, what did it matter? Gerty and her mother and her own people, Grandfather, Grandmother,



and the two aunts, all would know presently. It was not a thing that you could keep secret in your heart like a hopeless love. It was not a thing that she would wish to keep secret now that Stanley needed her more than anyone else in the world needed her.

Even before she parted from Gerty she had made her decision. She was going to him not because she loved him—she could have held out against her love forever, she said to herself—but because he needed her so desperately. Ever since Gerty had told her of the accident, a single picture had stood out vividly in her mind, as if it were flashed there on a blank white sheet by a magic lantern; and this was the picture of herself leading Stanley along a crowded street—oh, a street filled with people! Of course it was dreadful always to see things in pictures; but if your mind worked this way, how on earth could you help it?

Turning home, she walked slowly back again, with her errand forgotten. It was after six o'clock, and she must be ready, with her bag packed and her excuses made up in her mind, to take the night train to New York. "If I had the money with me," she thought, "I could get my ticket and my berth before I go in." But she did not have money enough; she had only the seventy-five cents for Grandmother's yarn, which she had not remembered to buy. She would be obliged to take the money for her trip, she realized, out of the green ginger jar when Aunt Louisa was not looking. "I am only taking what is mine," she told herself steadily. Though it felt like stealing, it was not stealing at all.

When she entered the house at half past six o'clock, supper was ready. "Just a cup of tea and a crust of bread in the evening," insisted Grandfather, whose digestion was weaker than his appetite.

"Did you get my yarn, Sally Byrd," piped Grandmother from behind the Rebekah-at-the-Well teapot.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Grandmother. I forgot it."

"Forgot it? Why, I thought that was what you went out for."

"It was, but I met Gerty Cunningham, and we got to



talking and the yarn slipped right out of my mind. I'll get it the first thing to-morrow on my way back from school."

She paused and looked as grave as if she were solving a problem in arithmetic. Then, after a minute or two of what appeared to be the deepest concentration, she said resolutely, "I promised Gerty to spend the night with her. Her mother is away and she doesn't like staying in the house all alone." How easy lying was, easier than speaking the truth! But why did she always have to embroider falsehoods just as she embroidered her plain muslin underclothes?

She walked through the entrance of the apartment house, and from the entrance into the large white hall. Here an attendant in green, just like the footman in a fairy palace, sprang up at her side, and she asked in a voice which sounded stern because she was trying so hard to make it steady, for Mr. Stanley Kenton. The fairy footman waved her to the elevator, but when she sought to enter it, a second attendant in green inquired if she was the nurse? "Orders are that I shall take up nobody but nurses and doctors."

For an instant she hesitated. "Yes, I am the nurse," she replied, after reflection, and stepped past him into the elevator. It was perfectly true. Hadn't she come all this distance to nurse Stanley?

They shot upward so suddenly that she caught at the iron grille for support.

"Is it very far?" she asked while her heart palpitated.

"Tenth floor," responded the attendant, gazing straight upward.

Then they stopped as quickly as they had started, and he had the manner of letting her out of a cage as he opened the door of the elevator. "Apartment on the right," he rapped out like a machine before he shot down again.

She walked to the door he had indicated, and with her hand stretched out to knock, she stood divided between the longing for Stanley and the impulse to turn and run down those white marble stairs which she could see in the distance. While she still hesitated, the sound of the returning elevator



reached her, and she rang quickly. To her surprise the door opened immediately, and a maid, in her morning gray and white, stretched out her hand.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said the next minute. "I was so sure you were a telegram. They've been coming that thick and fast I've had to stand at the door. We're dreadfully upset this morning because the night nurse was taken ill and had to go home, and we had to try so long before we could get you. You're the nurse of course?" she added, struck by the youthfulness of Sally Byrd's appearance.

"Yes, I'm the nurse." She had got used to the idea. "I'd like to see Mr. Kenton at once."

"Well, come in. You'll want to change into your uniform. I'll see what room you can go to. My, but you're young, Miss," she finished, as the girl followed her into the hall. "You don't look old enough to have been through training."

"I look younger than I am."

"That's a nice way to be. Just come into the living-room, and I'll find out at once."

Then, as she disappeared down the hall, Sally Byrd entered the long, bright room, which seemed to her the most beautiful place she had ever seen or imagined. A dampness fell over her spirits while she gazed at it. If only Stanley were not so rich, she would have felt better about coming.

Resting on the edge of a Florentine chair, she stared with fascinated eyes at the Italian furniture, the tapestry on the wall, the pictures, the books in rich and beautiful bindings, the wicker bird cages, the flower-like bowl of Venetian glass in which brightly colored goldfish swam round amid exotic seaweed. Yes, she wished with all her heart that Stanley was—well, not really poor, but less oppressively rich.

Then, in the midst of all this foreign-looking splendor her eyes, wandering about the room, were arrested by an object which appeared as out of place as herself. After she had once looked at it she found that she could not look anywhere else. On a little table near the fireplace there stood a workbasket filled with stockings that needed darn-



ing—just an ordinary workbasket made of willow. It was the kind of basket that Aunt Matilda and Aunt Louisa used, only in this case the stockings, she saw, after a minute, were really socks, black and gray, socks of fine, soft silk which had been worn into holes in places. In one of them the darning egg had been dropped, and a needle with a long thread in it was stuck carelessly into the pile, as if it had been thrust there by someone who had been called suddenly away from her work. Poor Stanley! He must have worn out all those socks, such nice ones, too, and flung them aside because there was nobody to mend them. Well, she was thankful now, though she had often complained of it, that she was brought up to be practical.

At the sound of a step in the hall, she withdrew her gaze from the workbasket and stared at the goldfish. A minute later she heard a brisk, composed voice saying, "Why, you can't be the nurse! You are scarcely more than a child, and this is a serious case."

Turning her eyes, which had been fixed on the goldfish, she met the astonished regard of a dark, pleasant-looking woman, whose hair, just sprinkled with gray, was brushed carelessly back from her forehead, and whose large, firm figure was beginning ever so slightly to spread. She wore the serene air of a woman who has passed through the furnace of romance, and has attained the cool judgment and the ample leisure which await those who have finished with love.

"I—I am not the nurse you expected," Sally Byrd tried to explain, while the other's kindly humorous eyes, with their disconcerting expression of taking everything with a tinge of irony, gazed at her wonderingly. "I came because I heard he was all alone and needed somebody to look after him."

"Oh, that is it!" observed the older woman, without surprise, and she asked in a gentle voice, "Won't you sit down?"

Sally Byrd sat down, and then, because she could think of nothing else to do or say, she stared at the workbasket.

"Yes, there are a great many, aren't there?" remarked the other, following the direction of the girl's eyes. "Men



are so careless about their things, and these socks cost seven dollars a pair. I thought I might as well go over them while I sit and wait. There is so much time, and I always hate to sit and fold my hands." Her glance went back to Sally Byrd, and she inquired in the same practical tone, "How far did you come?"

"From Virginia." Sally Byrd's voice choked as she answered, though there was nothing to do, she felt, but answer. If this competent-looking woman was a sister or an aunt of Stanley's, she supposed she had the right to question her.

"You knew Stanley in Virginia?"

"We met last spring when he was there. I thought—I thought—"

"Wait a minute," said the other quietly. Rising, she went quickly out of the room, and returned almost immediately with a cup of coffee on a little tray. "You look faint. I'm sorry there isn't any breakfast yet, but we have coffee made early for the nurses. Do you take cream and sugar?" She put the tray down on the table beside the work basket, and gave the cup to the girl. "Drink it while you talk. It will make you feel better. So you knew Stanley in Virginia?"

Sally Byrd nodded.

"And you fell in love with each other. Well, you're pretty enough, and I suppose he is charming enough, though I never quite understand that part of it."

This time Sally Byrd did not nod. She only stared with tragic eyes over the brim of the cup. The coffee did make a wonderful difference. She felt it go all over her just like happiness, only more staying.

The other woman sat down in the chair by the table, and picking up the sock with the darning egg inside of it, examined the hole, with meticulous attention, through a pair of rimless eyeglasses which she had slipped on her nose. Then she drew the toe of the sock tightly over the egg, and ran her needle in precise stitches round the hole. "That was spring," she remarked, without glancing up, "and this is autumn. A long time for a love affair to last."

"It isn't a love affair," protested Sally Byrd, in anguish.



"It is—oh, it is—" She broke down and began to cry softly. A miserable feeling had descended on her out of the clouds. She felt vaguely that her bright, beautiful romance had been pricked like a bubble, and was melting away into soap-suds. Glamour had suddenly departed. Stripped of illusion, she was beginning to see herself simply as a fool who would have to pay for her folly. In an instant, by an act of intelligence, she seemed to grow up, to attain maturity of judgment.

Still the other did not look up from her darning, so intent was she upon filling in the hole perfectly. "I know," she said, "I know, but why did you think we would need you? Didn't you know he had a wife?"

"But they don't love each other. They are separated." Sally Byrd ended in a sob, and hid her face in her hands.

The older woman nodded affirmatively over her work. There was a singular detachment about her, as if all shades of feeling had been absorbed by the ironic point of view. She possessed the dignity which distinguishes the spectator of life from the protagonist. Her unfashionable garments—for she wore an odd blouse and skirt with a courage which had become the better part of discretion—could not make her commonplace. Even Sally Byrd could perceive that this woman had attained a superiority that was independent of clothes, that was independent even of feature.

"Yes, we were separated three years ago, but in those three years he has sent for me three times when he was in trouble. Marriage for some men, you know, is merely a prop to lean against when they need support, and Stanley is one of these men. He doesn't need a prop often, but when he does he needs it very badly. Once he had pneumonia; once his heart was broken because some woman had thrown him over; and now this dreadful accident. This, of course, is the most serious. Even if he recovers his sight—and we hope to save his eyes—he will not be able to do without me for some little time."

While she talked she went on placidly filling in the hole with her needle. She did not look up, though Sally Byrd



was gazing at her as if she were in a trance and incapable of moving so much as a finger.

"You!" cried the girl at last in breathless amazement. "I didn't dream that you were his wife!"

"Well, I suppose I do look older. There is a difference in our ages, but the chief difference is that Stanley has never grown up, and I have. One of us had to."

"But I didn't know, I didn't know," said Sally Byrd, stumbling to her feet.

For the first time Mrs. Kenton let the darning egg drop into the basket and turned her quizzical gaze on the girl.

"Did you think that you were the only one?" she asked softly.

"The only one?" Rooted to the spot, Sally Byrd stared at her, while the tears rolled in pearly drops down her flushed cheeks.

"The only woman Stanley was in love with. There have been so many of them you know, that I wondered," she continued in her dispassionate tone. "The woman in the car with him—the one who was killed, poor thing—was the latest. He had just asked me to get a divorce, so he might marry her." For a minute she hesitated. "Of course he knew I would refuse, or he wouldn't have asked me."

"I must go," cried Sally Byrd wildly, while she groped toward the door. If she did not go at once, if she did not break away before another word was said, she felt she should begin to scream in the way Aunt Verbena had screamed when they told her her husband had been run over. Then Mrs. Kenton's voice, cool, composed, impersonal, arrested her, and she stood still at the door and turned round.

"Are you sure you won't stay to breakfast?"

"Oh, no, I must go. I must go back immediately."

"You will go back to Virginia and forget him?"

Lifting her head with a gallant gesture, Sally Byrd looked into the eyes that were watching her. "Yes, I will go back to Virginia and forget him."

Mrs. Kenton's face softened. "How old are you?"

"Nineteen. Or I was when I came here."



The other smiled. "At nineteen nothing is permanent. You will forget him and be happy."

Sally Byrd shook her head. "I shall forget, but I shall not be happy. It has broken my heart."

A wistful expression crossed the other's face. "No, your heart isn't broken—not so long as it hurts. When your heart is really broken, it lies still and dead like mine. You can't imagine the relief it is," she added simply, "to have your heart break at last."

For an instant Sally Byrd was awed into silence. Then she murmured under her breath, as if she were at church or a funeral with the deeper realities. "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I didn't know." She longed desperately to escape, but she could not go, she could not even move while those eyes, which had seen everything, were fixed on her.

The older woman opened the door. "Don't let it happen again, dear," she said, "but if it ever does, remember the wife. It is worth while to remember the wife because, when all is said and done, the last word is usually hers."

Then she smiled and turned away while Sally Byrd ran out of the apartment and into the elevator.

Down in the street she walked rapidly away from the building in the aimless, distracted flight with which people run away from a burning house or an earthquake. Not until she was breathless and ready to drop with fatigue did she pause long enough to look up and read the name Lexington Avenue. Well, it did not make any difference. From the way she felt she would as soon be in Lexington Avenue as anywhere else in the world. She was tired and stiff, and the bag was so heavy that she could scarcely carry it. Yet it had seemed very light when she ran with it down into the dining-room at home. "I must go straight back to the station," she thought. "I must take the next train home." For the first time, while she looked helplessly round in search of a policeman, it occurred to her that she had only four dollars left of the money she had taken out of the ginger jar. Not enough even to buy a ticket. Why, four dollars wouldn't take her much farther, she supposed, than somewhere in New Jersey. The practical difficulty eased the



pain in her heart, after the way of practical difficulties, and she began to worry less about her unhappy love and more about the problem of getting back to Virginia. "If I could only sell my clothes," she thought. "I wonder if there is anybody in New York so poor that they would buy my clothes." Then, while she stooped down to rest her bag on the pavement, a cool, smooth object sliding round her neck reminded her of her mother's miniature. "I shall have to sell the locket," she told herself with a grim determination from which, to her surprise, sentiment was strangely absent. "After an experience like this I suppose you lose your sentiment about everything" she concluded.

Her gaze searched the block and dropped like a tired bird on a jeweler's shop tucked in between a green grocer and a flower shop, where the window was ablaze with yellow chrysanthemums.

"I'll go in there," she said aloud; and picking up her bag, walked resolutely across the street, and through the small open door. Once inside she realized that it was a place where watches were repaired, but when an elderly man in big spectacles popped out of a box at the back, she held out the locket.

"I wonder if you would be willing to lend me some money on this?"

He looked first at her face and then at the locket, shaking his head all the time, as if he regretted what he had to say. "No, we don't lend money. Our work is repairing watches. I'm sorry."

"Is there any place near?" Her voice trembled. "Could you tell me of any place where they would take it?"

"There's a pawnshop near here. You might try there. Just a little way round the corner."

"Yes, I'll go there." She hesitated and looked at him wistfully. "Would you mind taking the picture out for me? I don't want to leave the picture."

He held out his hand, and when she had given him the locket, opened it and pried out the miniature with a pointed instrument. How lovely the face looked lying there in the palm of his hand!



"It's very like you," said the jeweler, handing it back to her. "That must be your mother?"

"Yes, it is my mother." As she said the words the realization came to her that her mother would have felt disgraced if she had known. Poor, soft, delicate, lovely mother, to be taken out of her case like that in a shop in Lexington Avenue.

Thanking the man hurriedly, she went out, carrying her bag with an effort because her arms ached, and started down the side street in the direction of the pawnshop. Yes, there it was round the corner. She could see the gold balls, and as she drew nearer, the window filled with a queer collection of rusty trinkets. She shrank from leaving her locket among the tawdry looking ornaments; but after all it would be only for a few days. In a week at most, even if she had to take the money out of the ginger jar, she would send back to redeem it.

Within the shop, which was saturated with the odors of beer and stale fish, a grimy old man, with a yellow skin and hooked nose, who reminded her of Shylock fallen on evil days, took the locket in his hand and examined it through a magnifying glass which he wore attached by a black cord to his alpaca coat.

"If you could lend me twenty dollars on this," she said nervously watching him.

After examining it, he laid it down on a strip of dirty red velvet, and muttered that he would give her ten dollars.

"But that wouldn't buy my ticket." Though she struggled to appear composed, the words burst out in a strangled sob. Oh, was any girl ever placed in such a dreadful situation before? "As soon as I get home, I'll send back to redeem it. Really and truly, I will send back."

In reply to this appeal he merely grumbled that, "they all said that, and he was obliged to make a living." Then, after haggling over the sum, he agreed to lend her fifteen dollars, and crept noiselessly away in his carpet slippers to the back of the shop. When he returned he counted out fifteen greasy one-dollar notes on the strip of velvet. Then he handed her the pawn ticket and one of his cards which was



as yellow as his face. Cramming the money and ticket into her purse, she picked up her traveling bag and ran out into the air. In the street she took out her handkerchief and vigorously rubbed her face. Would she ever feel clean again? Would she ever get that horrible smell out of her clothes? Well, at least she could go home. She would walk back to Fifth Avenue and take the bus that had brought her from the station. Only two hours ago! It seemed a lifetime, but it was, in reality, only two hours ago.

At the station she found that there was a train leaving immediately; and after buying her ticket, she went into the day coach because she could not afford to travel in the chair car. She was so tired she felt dazed and numb, and there was what Grandmother described as "a gone feeling" inside of her. By the time the conductor came by she had grown so weak that she asked him if she could get something to eat on the train, and, observing her plight, he helped her back to the dining-car. "Be sure to take this sick lady's order at once," he said to the waiter as he went back.

She ordered tea and toast and an egg, because that was what Aunt Louisa took when she was in the worst twinges of neuralgia, and after she had eaten the egg and sipped the tea, she began to feel better. An elderly woman in youthful black sat opposite to her at the beginning of her meal, and when she made an unexpected remark, Sally Byrd jumped as she did when the train jolted. Her courage and self-respect had oozed out of her under the pressure of disappointment. She felt not only tired and faint, but dreadfully humble and inferior, exactly like, she told herself despondently, the poor relation of the world.

Then the elderly woman nodded to her and went out, and a young man with blue eyes came in and took the opposite place. Presently, after he had written his order, he made a remark just as the woman had done, and Sally Byrd jumped again.

"Have you been ill?" he asked in a sympathetic tone. "You look as if you might have toothache—or something."

She shook her head while her eyes brimmed over with



tears. To think of looking as if she had toothache! "No, but I'm in great trouble," she answered.

"I'm sorry for that." He looked as if he meant it. "Is there anything I can do? Do you know I had an impression when I came in that I'd seen you somewhere before. You don't act in the movies, do you?"

In a rush her courage returned to her. "Oh, no, but I go to see them whenever I get the chance."

They talked a little while, and she discovered presently that he lived in her city, only a few blocks away from her home. She must have passed him often in the street, if she had only remembered. And he knew Abbie Dance, a teacher in one of the higher grades of the public school. "How very strange!" she exclaimed when he told her. And it seemed strange to him also, strange as well as profoundly original and significant. The kind of thing that had never happened to anyone else.

When she went back to the day coach, he brought her a magazine, and told her that he was stopping at Philadelphia to keep a business appointment. "But we'll be sure to meet again. I'll arrange that," he observed in his boyish way, which she found so attractive. He was really much better looking than Stanley, she reflected after he had gone, and so much younger. For the first time it occurred to her that Stanley was—well, not exactly old, but middle-aged. Yes, certainly middle-aged. Of course she had been foolish to let her heart be broken by a man who was both married and middle-aged; but since it had happened the only sensible thing was to make the best she could out of what remained to her. Romance, of course, was over forever, but there were many useful virtues in which she might learn in time to excel. All day, while the train was bearing her home, she sat turning the pages of the magazine, and trying to adjust her future to the procession of useful virtues which filed through her mind.

When she reached the city, day had drawn to a close and a mournful twilight filled the street as she descended from the car at the corner of her block. How dejected everything looked! How gloomy and depressed seemed the people who



hurried past her on their way home from work! How sad the falling leaves! How ugly and harsh the houses appeared under the yellow-brown in the sky! Well, she had had her adventure, and she would have to spend the rest of her life paying for it, she supposed. Romance was over. Nothing remained to her now except school teaching or church work, until she grew as old and stringy as Aunt Matilda and Aunt Louisa. Then she wondered how she could ever explain to them. They would never, of course, as long as they lived, understand. Looking ahead as she passed, limping with fatigue, down the street, she saw the future as a gray, deserted road strewn with dead leaves, and she saw herself, a small shrunken figure, toiling to the end of it. Yes, she had finished with romance forever. Then suddenly, out of nothing, there flashed into her mind the image of the young man she had met on the train. Would she ever see him again, she wondered. How smooth and glossy his hair was! How blue and sparkling his eyes! Why, he lived in this street, and she might pass him any morning on her way to teach school. The world, which had been so gray the moment before, became faintly suffused with color. In this very street, amid the falling leaves and the dust and the dingy houses, the indestructible illusion was springing up again. Yes, it was quite possible that any day she might meet him.

Her home was reached at last. There were withered leaves on the front porch. A light shone in the window. Well, she had learned her lesson. It seemed to her now that life had nothing more to teach her. "Never again!" she said softly, as she went up the steps and entered the house.



## V

### The Primitive Method

By F. R. BUCKLEY

*Nominated by ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Adventure*

“For now I know that thou fearest God; seeing  
that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son.”

*Genesis xxii, 12.*

I will attribute this one story to Alexander McWhee, chief engineer of the steam tramp *Elizabeth Kakelin*, and then I will positively withdraw the man from literature. He used to be a delightful liar—more cheerful, and much more indecent, than Boccaccio, but since Prohibition has become an accomplished joke, he seems to have struck a dismal vein of narrative. And while I have to visit his grease-dadoed cabin, for old sakes' sake, whenever the *Elizabeth* waddles into port, there is no good reason why I should pass his methylated woes on to the public.

Imagine the humiliation of being compelled to state, as preface to this yarn, that I found him lying in his bunk, bare feet out of the doorway to catch the port-to-starboard breeze through the alleyway—reading the Holy Bible! After a Bombay-to-New York voyage, too; with the delights of the Orient still fresh in his mind; the pleasures of the maritime Middle West—Liverpool—fresher still; and the joys of the Occident beckoning through a lavender evening mist as concealing, as alluring, and as brightly spangled as a nautch-girl's sarong.

“Na, na,” said McWhee, when I pointed this out to him. “Nautch me nae nautchgirls, laddie. Was it you that I



intrrrrjeeced to Bob Graham o' the *City o' Mombasa*, that time in the back street at Marseilles?"

"No," I said.

"Then it was somebody else," sighed McWhee, laying aside the Book and taking up the Bottle, "an' ye dinna ken Robert. An' noo ye never wull—the which is a great loss. Na, na, ye'll never ken Robert Graham noo—he's gi'en up the watter."

In spite of which recommendation, I don't know that I should have cared for Mr. Graham, even had he been available.

We should not have had graduation from Messrs. Thorneycroft's eminent academy in common; and, though McWhee will not believe it, there are people I prefer, as conversational companions, to fifty-year-old Tynesiders who talk, when ashore, about nothing but religion and their only sons; and when at sea, about nothing but religion and engines. In Mr. Graham's case, the religion was Primitive Methodism, the engines were triple-expansion, and the only son was named Robert after his father. Nominally to avoid confusion of names, but actually to evade any suspicion of favoritism, young Robert Graham was carried on the books of the *City of Mombasa* under the name of Ker—James Ker. He was fourth engineer, his father being chief.

"Didn't the gang laugh at this alias business?" I asked.

"Hoo could they laugh, whereas they kent naething aboot it—till the proper time?" inquired McWhee. "What would be the sense o' makin' the laddie sign articles incognito, as 't were, if everybody was tae be let into the secret? Na, na. His father ca'ed him 'Mister Ker,' an' he ca'ed his dad 'sir,' an' discipline was maintained wi'oot a crack. Not that onybody would ha' laughed at old Bob Graham in ony case. He was no a humorous man."

I should say he wasn't! One of his favorite moral theories, it seems, was that hell is in two sections; one here, and a hotter one hereafter; and that every man—having come into this world bung-full of original sin—is bound to patronize one establishment or the other. Graham himself, for instance, was working out part of his salvation in the



*City of Mombasa*, whose engines were liable to counterfeit the infernal regions—steam, shrieks, red-hot metal and all—at any moment; whereas the brassbound engineers of the P. & O., with their humming turbines and their cabins that hummed with fans, were simply extending their sinful notes of hand to be payable after death.

"Seriously?" I inquired.

"Aye," said McWhee. "Vara seriously."

Seeing that he held the same views himself, I let it go at that; and was forthwith introduced to the story proper.

The *City of Mombasa* met a gale in the Bay of Biscay; one wave of which took hold of twenty feet of solid steel bulwark, tore it loose from all its rivets save three, and left it hanging over the ship's port bow, where other seas could lift it light-heartedly, and slam it back against the side in a manner calculated to punch holes in the rusted plates.

The month was January, and the temperature of the sea was somewhere down in the basement of the thermometer; but nevertheless it was obvious that if no one man would take an icy ducking, everybody would; in other words, unless somebody crawled forward across the alternately submerged and naked iron plates of the deck, a rope around his middle and a hacksaw in his teeth, and cut that flapping five tons of bulwark loose, the ship would sink. The second officer tried it—and went overboard. The bo's'n started out with a cold chisel and a maul, but was picked up by a sea and hammered against a stanchion until his skull opened and his brains ran out.

It was at this point that young James Ker, née Graham, remarked that steel-work belonged to the engine-room anyhow, and went forward unroped, to see what he could do with those rivets. It was the general opinion that this lack of a lashing accounted for his success—he had no rope to hamper his movements when the deck was clear, and nothing to trust but the grip of his own hands when seas roared over him. Further, he had the happy thought of jamming himself in the fork of the bits; which, incidentally crushing two of his ribs, held him in position while he cut through the first rivet.



He had to crawl out of the steel embrace to get at the second; and the sea which caught him in the act of changing position almost sent him to join the second officer and the bo's'n. Though it failed in this, it stripped him of his trousers, his socks and his boots, and left him with so long a cut in his forehead that he could only see to hacksaw for thirty seconds at a time—the thirty seconds following the washing of his wound by a fifty-ton wave.

Under these circumstances, he cannot be blamed for taking half an hour to saw through the second rivet. He did not touch the third. Just as he prepared to hang over the side and grope for it, the ocean took the bulwark and twisted it clean off.

At the engineers' mess that night, Robert Graham, Senior, spoke three words—which, for him, at a meal-time, was loquacity indeed.

After the fourth engineer's heroism had been discussed for half an hour, and Mr. Graham had entirely finished his dinner, to the point, even, of wiping his mouth after the blackberry pie, he arose, jerked his thumb toward the cabin where James Ker lay, and said—

"Yon's my son."

Then he went away, and locked himself in his room until eight bells. Judging by the aroma in the alleyway, he celebrated the occasion by smoking a cigar. His usual load was plug.

"Sinful pride," I remarked.

"Ye think so?" asked McWhee, surveying me over a whisky glass. "Aye. Ye would—no' bein' a Scot. But Bob Graham the elder was a religious man—an' a philosopher."

"Oh," I said, repenting my irony.

"Aye," said McWhee.

## II

It is a well-known fact in physics, that oil and water won't mix. It is a still better known fact at sea, where the two substances are brought together through their attorneys,



the engineers and the deck-officers, that unless both oil and water are unusually pure, they will form an unpleasant compound at the line of contact.

On the *City of Mombasa*, the engineers were sufficiently alloyed with human nature to crow over their hereditary enemies, the deck crowd; and Williams, the captain, was impure enough to desire revenge.

So he dropped into the engineers' mess one afternoon at tea time; and after inquiring about certain ballast tanks started during the storm, improved the shining hour by taking the chief engineer to task before three juniors.

"Why did you have your son ship under a false name?" he asked.

Mr. Graham thought about that during three several gulps of boiling tea.

"Expeejency," he growled at last.

"Meaning what?" asked the captain, settling himself comfortably against a doorpost.

Graham laid aside his cup.

"Well, I'll tell you, Cap'n Williams," he said, slowly. "Ah'm no a liar by taste, just the same's the board o' this line are no' fools by profession. But in some respects, they are fools; an' one o' these respects is their dislike for havin' relatives together in ships. Ah'm a God-fearin' mon, Captain Williams; but on that very account, Ah'm also a just one. The *Manchester* bein' laid up for repairs, my boy was in need o' this job—an' weel fitted for't—as he proved twa days syne."

One of the juniors chuckled. Graham stared him into decorum.

"So," ended the chief, "when he was to be robbed o't by prejudice, I defended him by lyin'. The matter was no' important."

"Why didn't you keep the lie up?"

"Because when he'd cut the bulwark loose, it became important. Ah'll no' go intae the philosophy o't, Captain Williams. Ah'm a just mon, as I've telt ye; an' justice demanded that, havin' howked the boy through everythin' from measles to smashed fingers, an' stayed in jobs for his



sake that no bachelor or childless mon would ha' stuck for a week, I should take what credit he could do me, an' rejoice in the same."

Williams gave a short laugh.

"Well—heads I win, tails you lose," he sneered. "That's a regular Scotch trick. You disown him except when he makes a hit, an' then you step up for your share of the glory. Your God-fearin' scales of justice have only got one pan."

Graham arose.

"You misunderstand me, Captain," he said grimly. "Ah'm indifferent to the lad only so long as it mak's no difference. If I tak' pride in him when he deserves it, I tak' responsibility for him when he doesna."

"You mean that if he'd come into notice for stealing rivets, instead of cuttin' through a couple of them, you'd have said you were his pa just the same?" demanded Williams, moving out into the alleyway. "Yes, you would, like ——!"

"Aye," said Robert Graham, Senior.

Judging by the finality with which McWhee reached for the bottle, this seemed to be the end of a chapter or something—an unsatisfactory end; an embarrassing end; a subtly menacing end, which left me ill at ease.

"That word 'Aye,'" the present writer remarked nervously, "seems to be much in use among engineers, he-he!"

"Aye," said McWhee.

### III

We now come to the *City of Mombasa's* return voyage from Bombay to Barrow-in-Furness with cotton; week the second, and the third day. I apologize for this affected and inaccurate method of saying it was the seventeenth day out; but McWhee was so infernally Biblical that I find my style still influenced.

He was also quite noticeably lit when we reached this part of the story, which is why some circumstances following are not as clearly defined as I should like. My impression



is that the *Mombasa* had shipped a new stokehold bunch—all Lascars—in Bombay; had taken on two hundred tons of coal, carried in baskets by yelling Arabs, at Port Said, after the fourteen-hour run through the red and green buoys of the canal; and was making her way through the Mediterranean against a gale and a nasty short dead-sea. At four bells in the middle watch, the relieving helmsman had let the ship sheer two points off her course, and a sea had swept the head and foredeck clean of ventilators, awning stanchions, and even the great brass bell.

The engines were rung to half speed; the watch on deck turned out, with the third officer, to investigate the damage and cover the wrecked ventilators. It was eight bells before the third returned to the bridge to report; and at this hour he found Captain Williams in a fine temper over the speaking tube.

"Yes, it's your — son's watch in the engine-room, ain't it?" he was demanding. "Well, suppose you kindly go down an' tell him I'd just as soon my ship kept her propellers, if it's all the same to him. The screws have raced their fool heads off ten times in the last ten minutes, an' the engine-room don't answer the tube. You claim to be responsible for him, so"——

"Aye," said Robert Graham, Senior; and in purple pajamas, list slippers, and a uniform cap, left his gyrating cabin for the slick bars of the engine-room's upper platform. As he leaned over the rail, peering down into the thrashing maze of polished steel and red paint, the *City of Mombasa* pitched wildly; and the engines, port and starboard, roared on their bed-plates as the water-freed screws hammered the air.

There was nobody at the throttle valve.

Mr. Graham pushed his cap rather far back on his head, and went down the dizzy ladder rather faster than he was used. From the middle platform, in the stifling stratum of the cylinder heads, he perceived that the footplate was not only minus its attendant engineer, but entirely deserted. Not even a wiper was in sight.

For the first time in the forty years since he had become



salted to engine-room temperatures, Mr. Graham found himself sweating. He also found himself endowed with a power of voice he had never before possessed. His first shout, uttered in direct competition with the booming trample of the crank-pits, brought a scared-looking Lascar from the direction of the stokehold door.

"Where's officer-sahib?"

The Lascar approached sidewise, fawning.

"Where's the fourth engineer, ye black hunk o' perdition?"

The donkeyman spread his hands, muttering something about "go on deck"; and Graham, grabbing the throttle as the steel floor beneath him tilted forward and down for another plunge, sank his teeth into his lower lip. The engines, checked too late, shook the ship for an instant, and there was something in the feel of their vibration that diverted the chief engineer's eyes from the face of the Lascar to the steam gage.

The needle, which should have been touching one hundred and fifty pounds, was vibrating uncertainly around one hundred and ten. That would never do. The Lascars had been soldiering on the fires; and the first thing was not to find the fourth engineer, even if he was not overboard, but to get that pressure up again. The bridge might ring for full speed at any instant.

"You savvy work this?" demanded Graham, Senior, slapping the throttle.

The Lascar stepped forward, smiling; but there was a look in his eyes—

"Atcha, sahib."

The ship pitched again, and the man eased the valve well enough. The chief engineer, his face strangely set, his pajamas flapping, rounded the forward guard of the starboard engines, and dived through the stokehold door.

None of the furnaces was open. It was by the dim light of slush lamps hung on the sides of that steel vault that Graham glared at his dusky underlings. There seemed to be a good many of them—more than one watch; all sitting on their hams, with the whites of their eyes showing.



"Serang!" roared Graham. "What the ——'s goin' on here? Stoke, ye scuts, before I"——

The leading fireman, who had a white beard, got up; and so, without orders, did all the other stokers, including the deputy serang, the burra tindel, who ought to have been off watch. And though one man opened a furnace door, letting out a vivid orange glare to illumine that wild scene, the general movement was not, after the Lascar manner, away from the sahib; but—toward him.

The serang gave an order; it was not obeyed. He had to repeat it in a snarl before his men turned away and flung themselves at shovels and slice bars. And he had to speak yet again before the burra tindel left his side, and retired to the other end of the hold with the rest of the off-watch.

"It was noo that puir Gra-hic-ham's bluid must ha' begun to run cold," said McWhee, wagging his head from side to side in a manner most detrimental to the thread of the story. "In such fashion that instead o' askin' further concernin' the steam pressure, which normally he would ha' investigated wi' a wheel wrench, he looked the serang i' the eye an'—

"'Serang,' says he hoarse-like, 'whaur's my son, the fourth engineer-sahib?'

"An' the serang replied as followeth, to wit: That the young sahib had protested that one of the fiddley doors had jammed, and had gone on deck to wrastle with it; since when he had not returned.

"To the which Robert Graham replied, asking—

"'Did he come through here—has he been in here to-night?' an' the serang made answer, 'Nay.'

"An' Robert Graham the senior then said—

"'Ye lie, ye black ——, an' you've murdered my son!'"

McWhee now endeavored to burst into tears, wipe his eyes on a towel, and go to sleep, simultaneously. His desires being various, while I was single-minded, however, I won.

It appeared, rather disjointedly, that the serang's next remark was an advice to the chief sahib not to lay violence upon him, unless he desired death at the hands of the burra



tindel and his men, who had crept nearer bearing the tools of their trade—though they were off watch.

"The sahib has said, in the presence of one of ours who waits upon the table, that he is a just man, and fears God. I, too, fear God, and am just. Let us therefore speak together like just men, not snarling in the way of dogs."

"In irons, an' ye'll hang at Liverpool!" gasped the chief engineer, staring wildly from what looked like a lump of coal at his feet to the face of the serang.

"Whit, children," said the serang to the burra tindel's party.

And then to the white man:

"I, too, am a father."

Now chief engineer Graham burst through his Primitive Methodism into a stream of horrible oaths, and turned to rush back into the engine-room; but half a dozen Lascars barred the way; and when he tried to rush them, they seized him and wrapped their wiry, sweating limbs about him and bore him backward, and clamped his arms and legs, by sheer weight, to the hot steel floor.

He yelled at the top of his voice, knowing that he could not be heard above the beat of the seas on the closed deck gratings. There was, even, no racing of the screws to bring aid down into the engine-room. The Lascar donkeyman was easing the throttle with the dull reliability of the native under white command.

"Hurt him not, my children," said the serang. "He is a just man— Can the sahib hear me?"

Graham, staring up into the white-bearded brown face in the glare from a furnace door, gave a choking sob.

"Sahib," said the serang gravely, "I have killed your son. I am not a common Lascar, to lie under accusation. And in my time I shall be judged; but not now; and not in Li-'v-'apol. Were I hanged now, my daughter and her man-child would starve, and my honor be as black as though I had not avenged her. Thy son was a stealer upon the housetops; a murderer to boot."

Robert Graham writhed violently under the hands of the Lascars holding him.



"Ye lie!"

"Nay. I lie only in the way of business; not in the way of honor. I am—I was a merchant. Be just, O just man; cause me not to kill thee, and bear a double burden. Was not thy son in Bombay, a twelvemonth gone, in the ship *Manchester*—for two months, while there were repairs? Then he defiled my house by stealth; then he slew my son-in-law, who discovered him. And I have waited his return, paying many spies; and I have crossed the black water, working with my hands, for my revenge. Judge me, O God fearer! Look me in the face— Let him to his feet, dogs."

The fathers, the two just men, stood eye to eye; in the glare, as it were, of Hades; surrounded by imps of the pit.

"How it became known that I had done this thing, I know not," said the serang. "It was written that I should trust thy justice, rather than the lies of these dogs. Thy son defiled my house; I have purified it with the flames of his body, burning in that furnace. He slew my son by marriage; I have slain him. Judge, then!"

For half a minute, if my imagination is any good at all, there was a silence which the roar of the great fires, the thunder of seas on the deck, and the din of the engine-room, allied, were powerless to break. Then—I quote McWhee literally, less only the accent and the hiccoughs—then old Robert Graham turned slowly about, picked up the object like a lump of coal, which had lain at his feet when he accused the serang, and made as if to stuff this object into his pajamas' pocket. This task proved difficult, the object being of awkward shape, and Graham's fingers trembling as if palsied.

Finally, he took heart of grace, and flung it on the plates at the serang's feet.

"I'll—I'll no remember a seducer of women!" choked the chief engineer. "Throw's cap—throw's cap in—after 'm!"

Then, none hindering, he stumbled through the stokehold door and back into the engine-room.

Robert Graham, Junior, alias James Ker, was logged as lost at sea.



Once more, his father locked himself in his cabin; but this time there was no smell of cigars.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Aye," said McWhee; and went to sleep.

#### IV

He was fairly gone this time; but I had a chair and a novel and a pipe, and I waited until he awoke. This was two hours; during which time I read one paragraph and a half. The rest of the time was occupied in an examination of the face of McWhee; which in all probability bore a strong resemblance to that of Robert Graham, Senior. Same county, you know; same boiler works; same religion.

There were many things to notice in that face—a lot of faces, for one. There was a distinct resemblance to John Calvin, and another to Abraham Lincoln; though that may have been merely a matter of warts. Then one was reminded, somehow, of geology and botany—of granite rocks, and of sparse, desperately vital heather overgrowing them.

When he awoke, I asked him one question.

"D'you expect me to believe that tale about Graham and his son?" I inquired.

My drunken friend stared reproachfully at that blab, the empty bottle; wiped his mouth with the back of his hand; and then looked me in the eye much as Graham must have looked at the serang.

"Aye," said McWhee.



## VI

### The Dancer of Paris

By MICHAEL ARLEN

*Nominated by SEWELL HAGGARD, Everybody's*

Whereas all capital cities have many points in common, such as noise, news, the underworld, ragtime, Mary Pickford, cocaine, coughs and night life, Paris contains every one of these in marvelous abundance yet colors them all with the glamoured caress of her own illusions. Every one agrees about that, especially women. It is Paris, the city of straight streets, shining squares, queer murders, mad taxis and unshaven police. It is Paris, wherein you may meet men grouped together whom in any other city you would not ever see within miles of the same Y. M. C. A. smoking concert. All are here, crooks and crusaders, dagoes and deadheads, Princes, poets and Americans.

And in Paris you may see many beautiful young women from England and the Americas, and you may see the ghosts of many beautiful young women from England and the Americas, and you may hear tell of them thus and thus, the way they lived with laughing eyes and swift feet, the way they died within the tremor of an eyelash, which is a way women have. But not of death this tale, but of life, telling of Consuelo the dancer: for who in this world was ever more vividly, more magnificently alive than that golden lady, she who was called the Dancer of Paris? A notable compliment, you understand, in a city that has as many dancers as there were jewels in the caskets of the Queen of Sheba, or so they say.

Now of Consuelo Cox it was said that she was a hundred



per cent American, that she was a credit to America and an ornament to France, that she was as lovely a girl as you could wish to see anywhere, that she had pep, that she was so rich that her bank manager stood at attention when speaking to her, that she wore clothes so that Frenchwomen looked like Englishwomen beside her, that she had the finest collection of chinchilla coats of any woman outside of Los Angeles, that her ankles were so slim that she appeared to have no visible means of support, that her telegraphic address was *per ardua ad astrakhan*, that men were as minutes in her life, and that she danced as no one had ever danced before.

And so she danced, the Dancer of Paris with the enchanted feet, every night at the Salle Mandragora, which is in the Rue Caumartin, a street much in favor among those who are inured to the pursuit of pleasure.

A girl of quality was Consuelo, lithe and fleet and laughing; a girl like a tall flower in a wind that respects the poise of a tall flower, for what is life but a wind, and did mortal eye ever see shaken the poise of that girl? A golden girl she was, to be sure, as slim as a fairy; and of her enchanted feet a great poet has written that they were as the gold dust that lies on the floors of the dungeons of gayety.

And so, classically, romantically, with hair like the mimosa in an Italian garden, which is yellow sprinkled with fresh gold, she danced at the Salle Mandragora, with honor and without very much reproach; for was there ever an age or a country in which beauty could not break promises the more lavishly because of the lances that were broken in quest of it?

"But, say, that girl is hard!" some of her countrymen said. "She's as hard as a diamond!"

"And what, dear Heaven, do men know of women!" would cry Consuelo with extraordinary contempt, and her voice would float and flutter round a room like a bird with silver wings, for it was the voice that belonged to the enchanted feet, the voice of a syncopating dancer, with a cry and a lilt and a wave and a laugh in it.

Consuelo! Oh, Consuelo!



Now it came to pass, as things will, that Noel Anson, a young Englishman who had spent his time since the war in acquiring an international reputation for buying horses that only won races when he had sold them again for next to nothing—that young Anson, in his wanderings about Paris, one day came upon what he called a very superior flash of charity that had lit a very dark hole back of Mont-Parnasse.

"An almost blind artist, by Gad, with an incredibly lavish quantity of kids in septic circumstances," young Anson described the very dark hole. And in due time, when he had traced the flash that had lit it back to Consuelo Cox, he, a notably fearless young man in war and peace, straightway put the facts of the matter before her in some such way as this:

"By Gad, Consuelo, you're a good girl, upon my word! That's exactly what you are, child, and I don't mind saying it to your face"——

"You'd better not say it behind my back, Noel Anson, else you'll ruin my reputation!"

But young Anson muttered doggedly on, in a manly way:

"By Gad, you're a good girl, Consuelo!"

"Oh, shucks!" cried the golden American. But when Noel Anson looked into her eyes, which were as violet as the sea in a Southern sunset, he saw with wonder that the depths of her eyes were marvelous with the childish things that are called tears.

And she laughed at him with tight, mocking lips, in a way she had:

"And why, Noel Anson, and why shouldn't I be good, if I feel that way? Surely, boy, being good's an indoor sport like another, and haven't I contracted with the higher authorities for to try them all, sans blague et sans peur?"

"Then marry me, Consuelo!" cried the boy, with flushed face, eager eyes.

"Say, Noel Anson, is this a weekly habit of yours, proposing matrimonial entanglements to poor homeless American girls who are so blinded by the elegant cut of your clothes that they might accept you?"

"Consuelo, my God, look here!"



"The two don't go together, boy. Now don't go exciting yourself! I'm not going to accept you."

"I wish you would," sulkily muttered young Anson, he who never made a bet and won and never lost without a laugh—except now, when he was not laughing at all.

And suddenly he took her wrist—they were driving in the Bois, in Consuelo's car—and he looked at her desperately with eyes that tried not to plead overmuch, for it is not manly to seem to plead overmuch.

"Consuelo Cox, will you marry me?"

"I will not, Noel Anson. And if that isn't the seventh time you've asked me that same question, and with no verbal dexterity or lingual versatility whatsoever! And in broad daylight, too! Run, Noel boy, run! Else I might go for to accept you, and how much would your old dad back home like that, and he with a crutch in one hand and a packet of Grape Nuts in the other and a coronet on his head, just where the hard and soft tennis courts join, all ready to die and leave his son an adequate barony?"

And she laughed at him with tight, mocking lips, in a way she had which made some men say that they would rather be miserable with Consuelo Cox than happy with any one else; but then, to be sure, some men will say anything.

"You're in love with some ghastly man—by Gad, that's what it is!" muttered Noel Anson.

"Say, can I have my wrist back when you're through with same?" asked Consuelo very politely.

"Grudges me even her wrist!" he muttered, but held on grimly enough. "You are in love with some one else, aren't you, Consuelo?"

And there was silence awhile in the swift car, a silence of violet eyes that stared bemused into the passing sunlit grasses of the Bois, a silence of grim, blue, boyish-hungry eyes.

"Go on, tell a chap, Consuelo! I'd like to congratulate him. By Gad, I would!"

And the violet eyes, so large and thoughtful, spilled themselves over his brooding face.

"You're a good boy, Noel Anson. No, I am not in



love—not with any one—not with any one! Hear me, boy? I am not in love. Those are my exact words, Noel Anson. I have been—once. But not again, not on your life—no, sir!” And she could make a sudden laugh flood her eyes like sunlight in a crypt, for the confusion of men, and young men in particular. But, even so, young Anson later swore to the fact that the depths of her eyes were marvelous with the childish things that are called tears.

“By Gad!” said young Anson, never a young man with a large vocabulary. “It was saying that she was a good girl about that poor artist in septic circumstances that did it! Don’t tell me!”

“I’m not telling you anything!” muttered Roy Martel with a rather grim smile; for it was to Roy Martel that these things were being confided by his young friend on the very night after their passage.

“It’s a way that girls have,” said Roy Martel, “of attracting men. At least we will call them men, though I believe there are more technical denominations for them of a length not exceeding one syllable, such as mug, mutt, loon, boob or guy.”

“Fathead,” said young Anson.

“That’s of two syllables, Noel.”

“And I’ve got an option on the second one for this bit of backchat,” snarled the young man. He was annoyed. He had wanted sympathy and had got sense.

Tall and lean and dark was Roy Martel—or, to be as exact as he was in all things, was Sir Roy Martel, Bart, Financial Adviser to the British Embassy in Paris. An austere face, not young, not old, a face like a knife; and black eyes that were set in deep black shadows, so that passing strangers would look twice at the tall lean man as he strode from the Embassy to his flat as indifferently as though he were walking in a wilderness, and they would wonder if he were very tired, and they would decide that his were eyes that suffered from silence. But whether or not Sir Roy Martel ever suffered from anything no one might dis-



cover, for he was a quiet man with a cold look, and he never confided.

They said at the Embassy that he worked hard, too hard. They said he had a mathematical brain as brittle-bright as a searchlight. Noel Anson, who whiled away his spare time as an attaché at the Embassy, was of the opinion that Roy Martel's brain was like Clapham Junction, going this way and that without confusion and always, by Gad, getting somewhere! And it was to Roy Martel, long and lean and sardonic, of whom it was said that nothing bored him more than women except men, that the young man was confiding the burden of his love for Consuelo Cox. Not, you would have said, a sympathetic confidant, Sir Roy: but Noel Anson was a young man better versed in the merry practises of friendship than of love; and he liked, for once in a way, to talk to a brain.

"And so," murmured the brain, "you have actually proposed marriage to—that?" And he waved a thin white hand, a fencer's hand, toward the ceiling of his dim candlelit library—for it was in the immense apartment above his that the Dancer of Paris had, a few weeks before, come to live and laugh and dance. Candlelight was always favored by Roy Martel, as it frequently is by those who work with their eyes in the night.

Noel Anson, as fair as his older friend was dark, flushed.

"Why do you put it like that? You don't even know her!"

"I know every one," smiled the dark eyes from the flickering shadows of the candlelight. "And if you remember, Noel, I was sent to New York on the Loan Mission in 1915."

"You met her there!"

"Slightly," said Sir Roy Martel. "Slightly."

"Well, if it's only slightly"——

"And slightly," said Roy Martel, "was quite enough. Not that she isn't charming."

"You're prejudiced!" cried the young man. "That's what you are, Roy—prejudiced! It's a rotten way of killing time, that—being prejudiced."

"Perhaps I am. She makes too much noise, that charming Miss Cox. Listen to that."



And down into the dim night silence of Roy Martel's library, down from the ceiling to their chairs, lashed the shrill music of a saxophone band.

"She's got a party," said Noel Anson, and looked miserable.

"She has one every night—any way, she has had one every night since she took that flat." Roy Martel spoke without expression, in an uncomfortable way he had. "I think she collects every wastrel in the Salle Mandragora and brings them back. As though she hadn't enough of dancing!"

"Did she dance when you knew her in New York, Roy?"

"All girls dance," said Roy Martel.

"Yes, but try not to be an ass! Professionally, I mean?"

"I forget."

"Good God, what a man!"

"Listen to that!" A tired hand waved to the ceiling, whence came a noise as of a battalion of crows in harmony, a noise that sobbed and droned and yelled and wailed.

But it was a noise very near Noel Anson's heart.

"She never asks me to her parties nowadays," said he miserably. "She's trying to cure me of my infatuation, she says."

"I suppose, then," said Sir Roy Martel, "that she is in love with some one else?"

Then up rose young Anson, like an avenging cherub.

"That's just where you brainy men are wrong, Roy! You're always wrong about human people—by Gad, you are! You simply don't know, old boy! She swore to me that she wasn't in love with any one. She said she'd only been in love once in her life, and——"

"And it's time for bed," said Roy Martel. "Off with you, boy! I'm so busy these days trying to find some light in this Reparations mess that I need all the sleep I can get."

As young Anson went, muttering against the incivility of his host, which he described as lavish and lethal, all the clocks of Paris began the lengthy business of making it midnight. But Roy Martel, who so needed sleep to rest a brain that was a battlefield of figures, did not go to bed,



for he knew it would be no use. Slowly, slowly, he paced about his dim, wide rooms, the rooms of a man who liked fine, simple things, shining old woods, ancient golds and somber carpets that stole away the noise of footfalls.

The narrow hours struck, and still he paced, a gaunt shadow among dancing specters, for the draft through open windows and doors played furiously with the little candle flames. And from above, from the flat of the golden American, ever and again came the rustling whisper of sliding feet, ever and again came the shrill wail of the shining thing called a saxophone, and the beating of the drum, and the song of the violin, and the bass viol too. And the saxophone played, it played and played. "Oh God, oh God!" muttered Roy Martel, for he longed for the silence that would wrap him in sleep.

But silence did not come; and his tired brain grew livid with the noise of folly that sobbed and droned and yelled and wailed; and then, like lightning against a tortured sky, flashed a voice, a voice that waved and laughed, syncopating, syncopating.

A voice among voices:

"Dance, you all! Why don't you dance? What is there but dancing—to dance and dance, and then to die? Oh, you weak kneed mutts, don't you know! There's dancing—and then the Deluge! After dancing—the Deluge! And so we dance!"

And so they danced, on the shining parquet of Consuelo's white-paneled salon. Frenchmen, Americans, English and the dark et ceteras that collect like smuts on all great cities—they danced. And Consuelo danced. And the saxophone played. And Consuelo, hair like a golden halo round an ivory face, eyes shot with violet laughter. Consuelo sang, and as she sang her lithe body throbbed with grace.

She sang with arms outstretched, long white arms that swayed like white snakes, and she sang to the young man who had the shining saxophone throbbing between his lips.

And suddenly the voice of the swaying white arms was still, as though cut by a knife, and the white arms fluttered



irresolute, and the saxophone gave a silly wail and wailed no more.

In the doorway, as on the threshold of carnival whose name to him was boredom, stood a tall, dark, lean figure, with deep shadows round his eyes. He stood there as alone as a cypress in a garden. And he looked straightly at the queen of the garden, who stood alone on the shining parquet, as alone as a queen: and into her poise and look suddenly crept something of the calm dignity which poets have found in queens of olden time, so that her motley guests wondered at this Consuelo of grave demeanor and imperious carriage; and they stared curiously at the tall man in the doorway, and they recognized the red mark on the black silk lapel of his dinner-coat for the rosette of the Legion of Honor of the First Class, than which none is greater among the great distinctions of the world.

And he stood there, without a smile, as alone as a cypress in a garden, and he said:

"I hope," he said, "that you will pardon my intrusion."

"I hope so too," said Consuelo gravely. And a fool somewhere laughed.

"You see," explained the tall man, and he spoke as if he and the golden American were quite alone, and he spoke low, as though the sweep of parquet that lay between them was no more than the length of a cigaret. "You see," he said, "ever since you honored the flat above mine with your presence, some weeks ago, your activities have been such that I have been quite unable to get any sleep. And I thought, Miss Cox, that I would just come upstairs and mention that to you."

And the fool somewhere laughed.

"Quel dommage!" whispered a French voice.

"Say," cried the fool, "that's some gall! Who the hell are you, anyway?"

Consuelo swept a very white arm round the room.

"People," she cried softly, softly, "allow me to introduce you to Sir Roy Martel."

The man in the doorway bowed like an absent-minded courier.



"Pleased to have you meet us!" chuckled the fool, but the man in the doorway did not even glance at him.

Spoke Consuelo, very gravely:

"I am so sorry, Sir Roy, to be disturbing your rest. Of course I had not the faintest idea when I came here that you lived in the apartment below me. I assure you that I am sincerely sorry, Sir Roy. But now that I am here, what can I do?" And it was a helpless gesture that she made, but very swiftly the arm of Roy Martel pointed to the saxophone player.

"Need your young friend exercise his ghastly talent quite so relentlessly?"

And the frozen silence was ended by a protesting babel:

"Oh, say, the saxophone! We must have the saxophone! Why, the man's mad! Who ever heard of dancing without a saxophone?"

"I am afraid, Sir Roy," said Consuelo, without a smile, "that your suggestion does not seem to meet with quite unanimous approval, and I must consider my guests——"

"I was not asking for approval!" said the tall man harshly. "I was asking for mercy."

"Mercy!" echoed Consuelo.

And the fool somewhere laughed.

"Mercy!" echoed Consuelo, and her voice was as cold as a voice from a cellar, and her very white arms flashed up like a white torch, and she cried to the saxophone player:

"Play, you boy, play!"

And the saxophone played like a silly automaton.

Cried Sir Roy Martel, smiling curiously:

"So that is mercy, Miss Cox!"

"That is justice, Sir Roy!"

He looked at her, smiling curiously, and he went, as suddenly as he had come.

The very next night there happened a memorable happening at the Salle Mandragora. The dancer danced, she stood, she fell.

The Salle Mandragora is a restaurant of many tables, richly lit, and in the center is a space of marble whereon



all dance, except from ten-fifteen to ten-thirty every night, when dances only Consuelo Cox.

But that night as she danced, very golden hair and little white face, a green dress of the crinoline mode that swept widely to the floor, swaying arms and enchanted feet in shoes of crimson with a gold device—as she danced her hand was suddenly seen to press her heart, and she stood frightfully still, and then the golden hair was spilled upon the marble floor.

A press was quickly around the fallen dancer, startled waiters, maitre d'hotel and friends. Very many friends had Consuelo the dancer—very many friends of her face and body.

They parted before a voice that said harshly:

"If you will allow me"—

And they allowed him, and he of the voice lifted the still, slim dancer and carried her toward what a maitre d'hotel indicated was her retiring room. But, even as she was being carried, the eyes of the white face opened and stared, in the enchantment of weakness, at the face that carried her. There were very deep shadows about the eyes of that face.

"Why, Roy!" she whispered. "Fancy you being here!"

"I came," he said grimly, "to see you dance—and I thought I saw you die, Consuelo!"

And suddenly the mouth of the dancer laughed.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" she laughed. "And how sorry you'd have been, wouldn't you, Sir Roy, kind Sir Roy!"

He was quite silent, and she cried wickedly:

"Put me down now, please. I am quite all right now. Thank you so much for being so—kind to me. Thank you, thank you!" To the directeur, who was fluttering by them: "Monsieur Briant, I will continue the dance. Tell the orchestra."

"Mais, mademoiselle"—

"Must you always argue, Monsieur Briant? I have told you—I will continue the dance!"

"But Miss Cox, you are too brave!" protested the kind little man. "You look so white, you ought to go to bed."



The gentleman your friend is, I am sure, only too eager to see you home"—

"Oh, is he!" cried Consuelo with a peculiar laugh; and little Monsieur Briant was very surprised to find that the "gentleman her friend" was not, that he had vanished. . . .

And Consuelo continued her dance and was acclaimed for many minutes. But the very next day her doctor, a determined sort of man, told her that she must not dance again for a little time, she must rest. He was very definite about it.

"Your heart," said he, "is not very strong, Miss Cox."

"Oh, well, have it your own way!" sighed Consuelo as if she did not care very much.

Now when Noel Anson called at his friend's flat a week later, a Noel Anson with a rather anxious face, for there had come to the Embassy an urgent telephone message requiring his presence, he asked swiftly at the door:

"What's up, Mason? We heard at the Embassy three days ago that he was 'slightly indisposed.'"

"Double pneumonia," said Mason briefly.

"Good God, the man says it as though it was a double whiskey!"

"Little more whiskey and a little less work would have done Sir Roy no 'arm," muttered Mason. "If I may say so, sir"—

"Say on, Mason."

"He caught a chill, sir, walking up and down these rooms all night and getting 'ot and opening all the windows to shoot drafts into him as they might be bullets." Mason hated drafts. "And then, sir, this pneumonia came on sharp yesterday. Doctor's in there now. Dr. David."

"Ah, that's good!" murmured young Anson, for the great bearded figure of Dr. David was one of the most respected figures in Paris, fine physician and charming gentleman.

"About all that is good, sir," said Mason. "Sir Roy won't have a nuss, and"—

"But, by Gad, man, he must have a nurse! He must be made to have a nurse! You can't have double pneumonia without a nurse, Mason! Why, it's—it's—well, it's silly!"



"'E simply refuses, sir. Went mad when we got a nuss to him last night. Nice girl, too, sir. Scotch. But Sir Roy, 'e went mad, delirium and all, jumping out of bed and swearing terrible that he'd 'ave no women messing about his bed, not nusses nor angels—with one exception, sir. 'E keeps on making that exception."

"One exception, Mason!" Noel Anson wondered immensely.

"Well, sir, this is private, if you understand me, sir"—

"Of course I understand you, man! I could pass an examination on what you haven't told me."

"Well, sir, seeing that you're Sir Roy's good friend"—

"Oh, get on, man! If he's really dangerously ill we must get hold of this exception at once."

"Dangerously ill he is, right enough, sir. Doctor says 'e's as good as got brain fever on top of it."

"Couldn't happen to me!" muttered young Anson.

"And Sir Roy, sir, 'e keeps on asking for that young dancing lady upstairs to come and"—

"Look here!" cried Noel Anson. "One of us is mad. Which? Do you seriously mean to stand there at attention and tell me that Sir Roy wants Miss Cox to come and nurse him?"

"Not to nuss him, sir—to dance to 'im," muttered Mason sulkily, yet with a note of apology for his master, Sir Roy Martel.

Noel Anson whistled a thoughtful note between set teeth.

"And I thought he hated her!" he murmured.

"They was engaged to be married once," said Mason thoughtfully. "Anyhow, I *understood* they was engaged. In New York."

"Oh!" said young Anson. "Engaged! And then what?"

"Sir Roy, sir, 'e broke it off. So I *believe*."

"Oh, did he!" said Noel Anson. "There's a lot of oh's and ah's in this business, Mason."

"And Sir Roy and I, sir, we never heard nothing of 'er again until she suddenly comes and lives right atop of us here, all covered with friends and jewels, if I may say so,



sir. Lady she was originally, too. I think it upset Sir Roy considerable, coming against her again."

Young Anson frowned thoughtfully. Thinking always made him frown like medicine.

Mason added, almost nervously:

"Sir Roy, sir, I'm sure 'e would be very grateful if you'd come and take up your quarters here until the crisis is"—

"Say no more, Mason," said the young man absently.

Wise men say that there are laws governing all things, whether it be power or pneumonia, but, because there must be a "catch" in everything they add that we very seldom know what those laws are. Of pneumonia we know that there is a crisis that may come after days, and that if the patient is alive on the morning of the eighth he will assuredly—anyway, the chances are that he will—stay alive to die another day.

In the case of Sir Roy Martel it looked, from day to day, as if he would not survive the crisis. He breathed with increasing difficulty. And he seemed to care so little whether he breathed at all. He lay as though racked by a tremendous, dark indifference—except every now and then, when there was a flash.

"The thing," said Dr. David gravely, "has caught him in a wretched state due to overwork. Body tired, mind dead tired."

Mason grunted. He had no sympathy with all this working. And drafts. Mason, these days, had a fatal air of "I told you so" all over him.

The two men, under Dr. David's direction, took turns in the sick room: Mason in the morning, while Noel Anson read the newspapers in his room at the Embassy, a room especially fitted up for that purpose with chairs, desks, telephones and Blue Books: and Noel Anson in the afternoon, while Mason was "putting things straight," a leisurely pursuit also intimately connected with newspapers. When Mason was not "putting things straight" he was generally to be found indulging a grim passion for polishing brown



shoes. "Sir Roy," he told Noel Anson, "is very partial to a deep shine." Noel grunted.

The sick man spoke very little. He insisted on neither of his two "nusses" sitting up at night with him. Noel begged him not to be an ass, when he at once lost his temper, his haggard, saturnine face trembled with wrath, and so they had to soothe him.

"Mason can make up bed in next room," he just managed to say at last. "Leave door open. Call him when I want him."

But it was young Anson who took the bed in the little room next his friend's. Mason was inclined to be rather annoyed about that, but said nothing. Mason had spent a long life in being rather annoyed about things but saying nothing, and it told on his nerves.

On the third night, as he was "putting things straight" in the sick-room, suddenly said Roy Martel:

"Leave the door open."

Mason opened the bedroom door and, with a resigned look, left it open.

"Not that door, you fool!"—a harsh whisper.

"Why, there ain't another, sir!" pleaded Mason.

"Hall door, man—for God's sake. Leave it open—all night."

Mason consulted with Mr. Anson.

"Of course," said Mr. Anson thoughtfully. "Naturally you must leave the hall door open all night, Mason. It's always done in cases of double pneumonia."

"Both balmy," thought Mason.

Five days passed, silent days, feverish nights, tortured by a very sick man's fight for breath.

Delirium had at last left the thin thing which had once been the arrogant Roy Martel. He scarcely spoke, he wanted nothing. Roy Martel was what is called "a good invalid"; he did not sigh, complain, fret; and when he forced words between those harsh tortured breaths, he only said:

"I want Consuelo—to come and—dance—please, boy!"

"Certainly," murmured Noel Anson. Roy saying "please," like that!



"Why doesn't—Consuelo come?" whispered the sick man.

"You mustn't talk so much, old Roy! Good Lord, any one would think you'd only got extremely single pneumonia by the way you chatter on and on!"

"Boy, why doesn't—she come?"

Noel Anson found he could not look at the haggard face with the burning eyes. He set to arranging the blankets very thoughtfully. There is a great deal in arranging blankets over a sick man, and Noel Anson made a great deal of it.

"She's away in Provence," he said, not looking at the sick man's face. "I've sent her a wire at prodigious expense, saying you want her to come and see you. She ought to be here any moment now."

"Good—good!" And what was left of Roy Martel's fine face tried to smile. "Do you know," he whispered, "that Consuelo—dances like an ivory thing—in a world of—white velvet?"

"I've always said as much!" grinned young Anson. Anyhow, he tried to grin.

A thin shaking hand suddenly touched his wrist.

"She will—come, won't she?" pleaded—dear Heaven—*pleaded* Roy Martel!

"You bet your life, old man. Now don't talk any more, there's a good Roy."

And then Noel Anson sat for a long time very still in the large armchair by the window, and he tried not to listen to the tortured breathing of his friend, and he wondered what more he could do. He had done all he could, surely! Four times in four days he had gone upstairs to see Consuelo Cox, and four times she had refused to see him. The answers of the maid, an unsympathetic maid, had been:

"Miss Cox is not at home, sir."

"Miss Cox exceedingly regrets the illness of Sir Roy Martel, sir, but is afraid she cannot see you to-day, as she is resting."

"Miss Cox is not at home, sir."

"Miss Cox is not"—



"Oh, hell!" he had said that fourth time, and stamped downstairs.

And he had sent notes upstairs, several notes, saying in various ways, not too dramatically, that Roy Martel was very ill and would like very much to see her.

"He keeps on asking for you," he wrote in one note, "and he seems to want to see you dancing! He's almost got brain fever as well as pneumonia, you see. You might be a sport and do something about it, Consuelo. If you would just come down and dance a step or two for him and smile at him for a moment or two—couldn't you? The doctor says it might make a difference—please, Consuelo!"

He had bitten his lips in penning that letter. He had wanted to put that it was almost a life-and-death matter. "But it's a begging enough letter as it is!" he had thought. "How old Roy would hate it if he knew—*how* he'd hate it!"

But, even so, she did not come. And only one answer did she send to his several notes, saying:

I am so sorry, Noel, that your friend has pneumonia. I once had pneumonia, too, and it is certainly very wearying. I do hope he will be better soon. I am not doing any dancing at the moment, having been told to rest. You will have noticed that there are no more parties in my apartment, and I'm sure your friend is very glad of that! He has all my sympathy—but I am sure, quite sure, that he will get better, for Sir Roy Martel was not made to die of pneumonia. Yours ever,

CONSUELO COX.

And young Anson, with that letter, a very fine parchment of the Rue de la Paix, screwed between his fingers, had passed sentence of outlawry on Consuelo the dancer, whom he had loved. And he had remembered against her the words of older men, how they had said that the American was hard, "as hard as a diamond." And he had thought: "By Gad, she is! Just because old Roy once turned her down! Good Lord—women!" And he thought of the



words of the great poet who had made a poem about the golden dancer's enchanted feet: "They are the gold dust that lies on the floors of the dungeons of gayety. . . ."

"He'll die, he'll die!" thought young Anson, with the tortured breathing of his friend in his ears. And he made a great discovery—that he simply could not bear Roy Martel to die, because he loved Roy Martel as an elder brother. It is a curious thing, that brother love between men unrelated by blood, a furtive thing, very furtive, but very potent.

And he spent much time hating Consuelo Cox, her whom he had loved.

On the seventh morning, the grave, bearded face of Dr. David seemed to bear out the young man's most fearful thoughts.

"Dying right under a man's nose!" he thought. "Good Lord!"

Said Dr. David, into his beard:

"Weak, weak. Makes no effort, you understand."

Said Dr. David:

"104. Hum. 104. Pity. . . ."

And, directing them to do thus and thus and saying he would soon return, he left the three men, the three silent men.

Mason wandered about with a fatal air, "putting things straight."

"Overworking like that!" muttered Mason.

"Weakening hisself!" muttered Mason. "*And* drafts!"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Noel Anson.

Since that fifth day, when he had spoken with a flash of the ivory thing that danced in a world of white velvet, Roy Martel had not spoken the name of the dancer. To-day, the seventh day, he was quite silent—as silent, thought Noel Anson, as death. He was a sick, still man; and his throat seemed to be choking him, and his skin seemed to be burning him. They gave him grapes, but he turned his head away.

Now and then he opened his eyes and seemed, painfully, to look around the room. And then his eyes would fix on



the door, and they would stay on the door, with that profound, absorbed look of one who is going to die.

Toward 8 o'clock that evening Noel Anson decided that he must have some air—"or," he told Mason, "bust."

As he went down the stone stairway of the great white house in the Avenue Victor Hugo in which were the apartments, he almost caught up with a woman who was also going out, as if to dinner, a woman with a golden head in a chinchilla coat. Soft and shining she looked, and a faint scent was on the steps her feet had brushed. For a second he stopped, for just a second, then he strode on downward. The face of the golden head looked half backward at the noise of swift steps from behind her, but he did not see her, he passed her, as men pass the things that lie on roads.

"Boy, how is—your friend?"

Young Anson looked around, but did not seem to see her.

"Dying," he said. "Thanks very much." And he swung away as if he had not seen her.

That night, in the still, narrow corridor that joins life to death, Sir Roy Martel dreamed a dream. And in his dream he heard his own voice, quite clear and strong.

"And so," said the Roy Martel of his dream, "and so you've come!"

But she only smiled, a very little smile. She danced. A moon walked about the room.

"It would," thought Roy Martel. "There is no dream without a moon. . . ."

And the moon walked on the dancer's hair, and it seemed to him that her hair was a garden of golden flowers.

She danced, softly, softly, this way, that way, with a grave white face. It looked very white in the moonlight, and her mouth very red, and her swaying, shining dress very green, like grass.

"Oh, Consuelo!" said Roy Martel. "I love you, Consuelo."

"I know," said the golden wraith with a wise look; and she danced near to the bed on which he lay.

"Dear," he said, "I love you. Oh, God, I love you!"

"Consuelo, have you forgiven me?" he asked.



And as she swayed by the bed on which he lay, he kissed the hem of her dress. She looked very grave.

"I have forgiven you," she said, and danced away to where the moon walked across the room.

"Thank God!" whispered Roy Martel.

She came and sat on the edge of his bed, a golden angel coiled in a dream.

"Why," he whispered, "I can see your wings!"

"Dear Roy! Poor Roy! So ill!"

"I'm not ill now," he said proudly.

Her hand brushed his face.

"Listen, Roy," she said. "Why are you such a cruel man?"

"Oh, I'm not!" he panted. "I'm not. But I have been very proud, Consuelo."

"One should be so proud," she said wisely, "as never to take a thought of pride."

"I know," he murmured humbly. "Pride is mud."

"Children play with mud," said Consuelo.

"We are as God made us, beloved."

"Oh, Roy, I'm as you made me! You found a girl in New York, and you taught her love. You were a great teacher, Roy. You said that love was like religion, it must be done well or not at all. And then because she was a girl, and danced and laughed and played, you came to think that the gold had turned to mud in your hand and you left her. Just because you thought you saw that boy kissing me on the terrace at the Vandermarks' ball! But he wasn't, Roy, he wasn't! He was only trying to, the poor boy. Oh, Roy, Roy! I'm surely as you've made me—to do unto others as it was done unto me—that's what I have done with the life you threw away, sweet!"

"Crucifying love!" whispered Roy Martel. "I too, Consuelo."

"You've been a dark snake coiled in the hole where my heart was; that's what you've been," she said.

"But now"—he weakly clutched her hand—"we'll be so happy, dear. We'll live together in your golden hair, Consuelo. . . ."



"Roy and Consuelo!" she whispered.

And in that dream of his, she seemed to dance and dance, like a fairy made of moonlight. . . .

Young Anson awoke with a start and listened furiously. By Gad, he had been asleep. He listened to silence. "By Gad!" he thought frantically. "He's not breathing at all!" For always through the wide open door between the two rooms he had heard Roy's breathing. But now!

Then he saw that the door was closed! The door was *closed*! Who the hell had—that fool, that septic fool, Mason!

When Noel Anson opened the door of his friend's room he saw an amazing thing.

"By Gad!" he said. "By Gad!"

And he smiled thankfully, for the man on the bed was sleeping, and his breathing, though still harsh and broken, was as the breathing of a living man.

"Well," he thought, "now what d'you know about that!"—which was an Americanism he had caught from Consuelo's friends.

Never will Noel Anson know why, passing quietly through Roy Martel's room, he went out into the hall. Perhaps he intended to close the front door, always left ajar according to orders. But he did not close the front door, because, lying across the threshold, was a thing as still as a cut flower, a green flower. And it lay coiled; it seemed to Noel Anson as if it lay coiled in a gap in the world's rushing movement. And he stared down with eyes that did not see at the golden head spilled across a bent white arm . . . white as snow in heaven.

As he re-entered the sick-room Roy Martel stirred.

"Good Lord, boy, you're—crying!" he whispered hoarsely. Sick men are very tactless.

"Oh, am I!" snarled Noel Anson. He pulled himself together. "I'm so glad you're a little better, Roy."

"I had such—a happy dream, boy!"

"Ah!" said young Anson vaguely. "Did you! A dream. Ah! Just a moment, old man."



And he went out into the hall again. "Perhaps I was dreaming too," he thought. But there, lying across the threshold, was a thing as still as a cut flower, a green flower coiled so that its golden head was spilled across a bent white petal. And then——

"Good God!" whispered young Anson.

And he stared like an idiot at the stirring figure and the opening eyes. They were sleepy eyes!

"Sweet," said the lips of the sleepy eyes, "are you pleased now? Is your friend better?"

"But!" said Noel Anson. "But!"

And Consuelo, lying coiled on the threshold, smiled up at him a wise smile.

"You see, boy," she said, "I wanted to cure you of your love for me—and I almost did, didn't I?"

He knelt beside her.

"Almost," he whispered.

"Yes," she said. "Because, Noel, you are such a good boy, and I am bad, so bad! Rotten I've been, sweet—and so I thought I'd give you a chance of ridding your heart of me. But when you passed me on the stairs this evening, like a contemptuous god—— Oh, dear, love was too strong for Consuelo!"

He touched her hand. He kissed it, like a schoolboy.

Back in the sick-room, Roy Martel whispered: "I wonder if it was—a dream! It was so clear, boy! But I—suppose it must—have"——

Young Anson was staring at the toneless dawn outside the window.

"Of course it was a dream, Roy," he murmured reasonably.

But Roy Martel was not listening; he was asleep.

Often, as he grew stronger, he wanted to dream that dream again. And when, a few months later, he had a letter from Noel Anson in London saying that he and Consuelo were married, he pursed his lips and worked very hard.



## VII

### Wild Bill McCorkle

By SAMUEL A. DERIEUX

*Selected by MERLE CROWELL, American*

On a certain Monday morning in January, in the darkness that precedes the dawn, the Reverend Charles Edward Hopkins rose from his bed, stealthily so as not to rouse his wife; tiptoed about for his clothes, cautiously so as not to wake his children; ate a secret snack in the kitchen, endeavoring, like a thief or a husband, to obliterate all traces of having done so; and, long before the town was awake, set out in a buggy, shotgun between his knees, for the fastnesses of the mountains that rose like dark clouds beyond the town.

It was a mysterious performance. It was not the kind of thing well-regulated preachers are expected to do. Yet as the day dawned you might have seen in the buggy a rather pale and gentle-looking man, the kind of man who, you would think, would love wife and children, and who had become a little careworn in the effort to provide for them out of a small salary, to give his children an education, to keep up a decent appearance for them.

The sun was just rising in the mountain valley when the preacher drew rein before a house substantially built of logs. Before he had time to alight, there emerged from the house a giant whose beard was like copper wires, whose nose was like an eagle's beak, and whose eyes, barring a twinkle, were as bold and fierce as a Viking's.

The hearty voice of the giant started the echoes in the wooded hills:



"Come in, Preacher. Glad to see you, sir. Come in and warm. Fine day we're goin' to have. . . . Git down, Frank!" he commanded one dog. "Git down, Joe!" another. . . . "Glad to see you, sir, powerful glad."

The giant's mighty paw closed fraternally over the preacher's slender hand. The preacher looked keenly, whimsically, into the big man's eyes. "How're things, Bill?"

"Couldn't be better, sir. Been behavin' myself. Ask the ol' woman. Puts a powerful strain on me, but the ropes hold. Go on in to the fire. Must be froze. Molly's got breakfast ready. Fine mornin' for 'em. Fine!"

A red-headed boy with a tooth conspicuously missing when he grinned took the preacher's horse; and into the house where a fire roared up the chimney went the man of might and the man of God. These men were hunting companions of long standing.

They ate, as they always did on Monday mornings during hunting season, an enormous breakfast in the kitchen. They fed the dogs on the back porch. They rammed their pockets with shells and lunch, and set out.

On these weekly jaunts they always went to the river valleys if it was birds or ducks, to the big woods if it was turkeys. Sometimes they called by Jeff Bennet's house and Jeff joined them, sometimes at Cal French's and Cal went along. Sometimes they came back with pockets heavy with quail, sometimes with a wild turkey or two, sometimes with a string of ducks. Molly would have supper ready; there would be a pipe afterward by the fire. Then the Reverend Charles Edward Hopkins would start back to town. And so would end a perfect day.

It was significant that nearly every Monday morning about nine o'clock, particularly of late, old Deacon Withers, on his way to business, stopped, as if by accident, and rang the bell at the parsonage where the Rev. Mr. Hopkins lived. On this particular Monday, Mrs. Hopkins herself answered, and her face grew pale when she saw him.

"Good morning, Mrs. Hopkins," the deacon said, and



smiled. "Is Brother Hopkins in? I want to see him just a few minutes. Church business."

"He's not in, Mr. Withers."

"I suppose he'll be in later?"

"No—he's out hunting to-day."

"Ah, I see. He's very fond of hunting, isn't he? May I ask where he's gone? I may be able to find him."

"He's out at McCorkle's," the woman answered desperately.

"Ah, I see. Thank you, Mrs. Hopkins. I'm sorry he's not in."

So he said. But as he continued down the street he looked far from sorry—he looked shrewdly happy and triumphant, as old men of his type can look on occasion.

And when, as he walked along the street, he met Joe Dodd, another member of the congregation, he stopped and told him casually that he had just called by the preacher's and found he was out.

"Hunting," he explained. "He's very fond of hunting, very fond." Then, when Joe Dodd showed an interest (gossip is not confined to women), the deacon continued, "Hunting with Bill McCorkle. He's very fond of Bill McCorkle, very fond." Joe Dodd continued to show interest, tinged with the infection of his own disapprobation. "Are you busy? Will you come to my office?" asked Withers, encouraged by the attitude of his friend.

Then, in the railed-off sanctum of his private office, the older man leaned forward and said, "There's a great deal of dissatisfaction with Brother Hopkins. I'm sorry it's true, but I find it talked of everywhere; and I'm afraid the work of the Lord is suffering. People say he cares more for hunting than for the Lord's work. He shows a preference for men who are not an honor to the Lord's cause. I am only repeating what I heard. It pains me more than I can express."

And, these seeds sown, he went about his day's work, a smile on his thin, hard face.

Most churches have several pillars. But the First Church of Mountain View had only one—and that pillar was Deacon



Withers. It was he who practically chose the pastors; it was he who decided when their term of usefulness was passed.

Deacon Withers had a goodly share of the town's wealth and a long finger in most of the town's business activities. His wholesale and retail supply store occupied a brick building three stories high, and, in the front, on the second floor, was the office where he lent money and handled his other outside affairs. Like most money lenders of his type, he specialized in mortgages, and many of the poorer village folks and the outlying mountaineers complained bitterly at the harshness of his terms.

Eventually, Deacon Withers came to dominate the church—he had long since dominated the village and its countryside. There were those who had objected to his iron-handed rule, and who had quietly effaced themselves from the congregation. Others had stayed because there was no other church of the denomination to attend. The flock, however, had been on the point of real disintegration when the Reverend Charles Edward Hopkins had come to the First Church—a man who was not a pulpit orator, but whose deeds of kindness and all-night vigils at the bedsides of the sick, whose quick charity from his small salary, had won the hearts of the poorer and humbler parishioners and had brought many of the other absentees back into the fold.

Between the minister and Deacon Withers there had been, from the first, a clash of wills. But the Rev. Mr. Hopkins was a follower of the Prince of Peace, and he believed in peaceful measures whenever they were possible.

"Brother Withers is hard, but I think he means to be just," he told his wife one day. "Anyway, I can do more right now working with him than against him. He supports the church liberally, and I can't believe that he would do anything intentionally to its detriment."

The first open break had come when Bill McCorkle had been admitted into the church. The deacon had expostulated vehemently.

"Wine bibber!" he exploded. "Sot! Really, Brother



Hopkins—" and he shrugged his shoulders in eloquent disdain.

"But he has reformed," said the pastor quietly. "He has given his heart to God."

"Reformed fiddlesticks!" exclaimed the deacon. "I've known the McCorkles for three generations—and none of them ever kept sober for thirty days at a stretch."

Strangely enough, Bill McCorkle had kept sober for thirty days, and indeed for much more than that length of time, although he admitted that he had often been "sore tempted." Perhaps the weekly hunting visits of the pastor had helped Bill stick it out. But whether this surmise were true or not, it was quite clear that these visits were viewed with extreme disfavor by Deacon Withers.

Admittedly Bill McCorkle was not the kind of man a preacher usually selects as an associate. Bill had a lively past. Once he had been known as Moonshine Bill, and at that period he not only made liquor in large quantities but consumed it in the same measure.

Everybody had known Wild Bill McCorkle, the oid people especially. He was a roaring, roystering roughneck. Who had not heard of that Saturday afternoon when he came to town and got on a great drunk, rode his horse up the courthouse steps on one side and down on the other, celebrating his arrival at the top by waving his old felt hat and shouting, "Hurrah for Jeff Davis!"

And who was there who did not know about the time he stood up in his wagon in the middle of Courthouse Square and made a memorable, albeit riotous, speech on the Constitution of the United States, which, according to the interpretation he announced that day, gave to him and to every man the right to do what he pleased and say what he pleased.

And who couldn't recall how the Rev. Mr. Hopkins, newly installed in his duties as pastor of the First Church, had gone up to him, and told him to cease his oratory and go home where he belonged.

"All right, Parson," Bill had cried, with a grand flourish of his blacksnake whip. "If you say go, I'll go. Shake!



You're what I call a man. I like you, an' when I like a man I like him. Come out an' hunt with me. The latchstring's on the outside. Good-by, boys. Speakin's over. No mo' oratory. Hurrah for the Constitution of the United States!"

Standing erect in his wagon, his red beard flowing out behind him, he had driven like a rattling charioteer down the main street of the town, and out toward the vaster freedom of the mountains at whose base the town was nestled.

Soon after that the boy with the gap in his teeth had been taken down with fever, and Hopkins had gone out with the doctor. It had been a terrible night in that mountain home, with the boy almost gone, and Mrs. McCorkle weeping, and Old Bill walking the floor saying, "God A'mighty have mercy, God A'mighty have mercy on the little kid! Preacher, can't you do nothin'? Won't God A'mighty listen to you?"

But it was said the preacher had prayed for more than the boy that night—he had prayed also for Moonshine Bill. Anyway, Bill had joined the church.

"He's a disgrace to the church!" the deacon said over and over. "He's a stumbling block and a reproach to the cause of the Lord."

But always there was the preacher to defend him, "He's an erring man," Hopkins would say. "So are we all. He's a violent man but not a vicious one." And once he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "He's the best shot I ever saw."

This made Withers rage and grind his teeth. But Bill McCorkle's name remained on the records of the First Church even though Deacon Withers believed that it was absent from other and more celestial records.

Then something happened which widened the gulf between preacher and deacon—widened it visibly.

Deacon Withers, an enterprising man, one Sunday morning made the church a present of three hundred fans. Now, fans are a pleasant relief on hot Sunday mornings, and a gift of three hundred of them neatly and ostentatiously stuck in the hymn-book racks ought to be gratefully received.

But these fans were nothing more nor less than flam-



boyant advertisements of the Withers store, its name being printed across them in bold red letters, with an additional advertisement of a notorious patent medicine of which the Withers company was distributor. Mr. Hopkins, before service, ordered the sexton to remove them and to return them to Mr. Withers.

"I don't suppose you've thought about it, Brother Withers," the preacher explained; "but, you see, if we allow you to advertise in the church, we will have to allow others to do the same. I know it just hadn't occurred to you. I thank you all the same."

The deacon looked at the preacher with hard, inimical eyes. And from that time on he began his campaign to run Mr. Hopkins out of town.

He set about it shrewdly. There are always malcontents. These the deacon worked on. There are invariably to be found a certain number of people who like excitement and gossip. These also he worked on. Then there are the puritanical ones, who believe that a preacher ought to be "spiritually minded"—they themselves interpret the phrase—and to whom hunting and other worldly amusements are not "spiritual." These he worked on.

"It grieves me more than I can describe," he declared over and over. "I hope you will not bring my name in. But I think you will find a very strong sentiment in the church in favor of a change."

The plot spread. Busy men and busy women paid little attention to it—in fact, they didn't pay enough attention to it. That's usually the case. But there were women who thought Sister Hopkins rather "stuck up." Sarah Finny, for instance, thought she didn't visit enough for a preacher's wife. Of course she had children; but the work of the Lord ought to come first. Yes, put down her name. And then he had his own clique. Deacon Crump, his partner in business, who did anything he said (Withers owned most of the stock); Brother Thompson, on whose home Withers held a mortgage; even Brother Hulsizer, superintendent of the Sunday-school, who had never been noted for his independence, but who could draw excellent charts of the Red Sea



on the Sunday-school blackboard, showing where the Children of Israel crossed.

Deacon Withers, sitting in his office like a spider in the center of his web, seemed to be only remotely connected, if at all, with those fine threads that went into the homes of the members of the church.

There are people who never suspect others. Mr. Hopkins was one of these. He thought he was doing a good work. He attracted young people, and it was commonly said that the town had improved since he came. He preached good sermons on everyday fair dealing and honesty. He liked his field. His wife and children had been healthier here in the mountains than they had ever been before. His children were doing well in school. He had high hopes for them, and dreamed of the time when each one would enter the world with a good education, with a body stronger than his, with a mind, he hoped, better stored.

He was fighting the battle tens of thousands of obscure preachers fight, there in the little home with the fine maple tree in the front yard that turned vermilion each fall, and the vegetable garden in the rear that cut down his grocery bills, and the cow in the lot that did away with milk and butter bills.

But in his nature was something that called for romance, for a getting away into the mountains where he could breathe freely.

Once, when his wife cautiously suggested that he stop going out to McCorkle's, his manhood flared up. He thought of Old Bill, his comrade, of the times they had tramped through bottoms after quail, of the hours they had spent silently in blinds after turkeys. The mystic tie that unites men who hunt together tugged strong at his heart, and he looked at her anxious face with eyes that for the moment were stern.

"I'm not going back on Bill," he said.

She did not have the heart to insist. Perhaps she loved him the better because of this loyalty in him she did not quite understand. It was hunting season again and she knew how much her husband loved to hunt.



Then came the blow. Old Jeff Bennet told Bill McCorkle about it. Jeff had gone to town the day before and had heard the talk; he was something of a detective too, and had run down and ferreted out the plot.

If he had gone home that night and told McCorkle, there might have been time given to collect the forces in favor of the preacher. But Jeff spent the night in town. Even next morning, instead of striking straight out, he loafed around a while, and saw a dog-fight. It was noon, therefore, on Wednesday, before he drew up in front of McCorkle's house.

For a minute after he announced his news, Moonshine Bill's face, according to Jeff Bennet's description afterward, was "turrible" to look at. Then Jeff went on: "He looked like a man tooken sick. It had dawned on him all on a sudden that folks crickticized the preacher for huntin' out here. He got hisself together, an' asked a few questions, quick an' to the point. 'Now, here's what's happened,' I says to him; 'I been hearin' it a long time, but never paid no attention: Ol' Man Withers has been sowin' seeds of discontentment because the preacher comes out here an' hunts with us fellows—you 'specially. He's got 'em all sowed. They've growed up an' ripened. To-night's the harvest. You know there don't many folks go to prayer meetin'. To-night's the time for business meetin' too, and Old Man Withers has notified, or had others notify, the folks that are dissatisfied, or think they are, to be thar. He's goin' to pack the church with them that ain't got any better sense than to side with him. He's goin' to ask the preacher's resignation—get somebody else to do it. Then he's goin' to take the vote.'

"'Great Jehosaphat!' Bill yells at me. 'An' you stand here an' take up my time with that long-winded yarn? Look at that sun, man. Me an' you's got to hustle. Move quick. Help me hitch up this critter. Get a hustle on you. I'm goin' to town. I'm goin' to make a speech, like of which I never made before. I'm goin' to mop up the streets with Ol' Man Withers, an' string him to a pole!'

"'An' what good'll that do?' I asks him. 'They're again'



the preacher because he's a friend of yours. They say you're a roughneck. That's what's the matter now.'

"Well, he told me to wait, and went back to the house. Thar him and his wife talked, excited. She looked skeered, like she used to look in the old days, when Bill was a wild one an' the revenue man a-snoopin' round. Then that snaggle-toothed boy of his'n come runnin' out to the lot an' begun hitching up the wagin like a house was afire, an' Bill come in a hurry toward me.

"'Up the road,' he says to me, 'you'll find Cal French and Frank Stedman. They're members of Mr. Hopkins's church. Tell 'em I say to be thar to-night. Keep on to Franklin's store. Ef you see any members in reg'lar standin', tell 'em the same. Don't tell the crowd—take the reg'lar members aside. Hustle! Move! Don't set thar lookin'!'"

So Jeff prodded up his mule, while McCorkle hurried back to the house.

"Git on yo' Sunday clothes, Molly," he commanded. "You're a member, an' these here is woman's suffrage days. Git the chillun ready, ev'ry single one of 'em. They're goin' to see a fight!"

At first Molly protested, saying she didn't like to mix up in things like that, but Bill turned on her.

"Remember the night he knelt by that-ar bed, woman?" he cried.

There was some delay, for she would have him put on his blue clothes and a clean shirt. She even took a few snips with the scissors at his beard, leaving the copper wires to scintillate on the floor.

It was four o'clock when a wagonload of red-headed McCorkles rattled into town, followed by two setter dogs, one of them red also. Old Bill had not noticed them when he left home. He was hardly conscious that they were following him when, leaving Molly, he hurried up Main Street.

It looked to him at first as if the street were deserted. Usually a group of young people loitered in Thompson's store, but now there was only Jack Crump, son of Deacon Crump, a young fellow reputed as wild as his father was



pious, who had recently been studying law in Captain Duncan's office. At the curb was Jack's high-powered roadster.

"Whar's the rest of the crowd, young man?" demanded Bill.

"Oh, they've gone to a Sunday-school supper at White's Pond."

"What! This time of year? Who got it up?"

"Hulsizer. Who else? Pulled some kind of bunk about the preacher's not minding their taking one night from prayer meeting—as if they ever go anyway. Said to-night was full moon, and the weather mild for winter. It's for every member under thirty. They all went in cars, of course. . . . Why didn't I go? Well, you know, old man, I don't take much stock in Withers and his crowd. My name's on the roll, but I don't go to preachin' very often, and I wouldn't go at all if it wasn't for Preacher Hopkins. He's a real fellow."

"You're the man I want to talk to," said Bill.

And while Bill was talking, earnestly, in lowered tones, Hulsizer himself passed. Hulsizer had not attended his own party!

Perhaps Jack Crump went to take his place there, for when a little later his car roared out of town it was headed in the direction of White's Pond, out over the rough mountain roads.

Up Main Street Bill hurried, and turned into Captain Duncan's yard. The captain was, next to Withers, the prominent man financially in the church, but, unlike Withers, took no active interest in its affairs. He was a man who could be depended on to stand for what was fair. It was he whom Bill counted on to lead the fight.

Mrs. Duncan herself answered the door bell. The captain was away, she said—he had gone to Atlanta on business.

"Did Mr. Withers know he was goin'?" asked Bill.

"Oh, yes. He is to attend to some business for Mr. Withers."

Out of Captain Duncan's gate Old Bill came, and his face was troubled. Two blocks up the street lived Doctor Boyd, leading physician of the town, and also a member of the



church—a man too busy to take an active part in church management but too just to see an unfair thing done.

"The doctor had gone to a medical convention in Birmingham," said Mrs. Boyd. . . . "Yes, he always goes this time of year."

Bill was struck silent; then he spoke: "Mrs. Boyd, mebbe you know. How are things decided in church—who'll be the preacher, an' such?"

"In our church," she replied, "the majority governs such matters."

Bill thanked her and left. At the gate he stood a while, pulling his beard, like a man bewildered. Then he left Main Street for the highways and byways of the town's life—the cotton-mill villages, the neighborhood of the lumber yards. People turned to look after him in astonishment as he hurried along, red beard streaming against his broad chest, bird dogs trotting at his heels. He did not go near the preacher's home. He had warned Molly not to do so. "He'll up an' resign if he finds it out," he declared. That was why it happened that Hopkins, working in his winter garden, and Mrs. Hopkins, busy in the kitchen, did not know he was in town, did not suspect that a battle, with their fortunes at stake, was brewing on that golden afternoon.

Deacon Withers, busy in the rear office of his store, heard some rumors of what was happening, but these rumors he listened to with a smile full of irony. Well he knew the futility of unorganized effort, and the power of a movement which *was* organized.

The meeting to-night was to be packed. The officers were of his own choosing. Mr. Crump, his partner, was moderator. Joe Saunders, a corpulent bachelor whose fat bass voice in the choir the preacher was said to have deplored, thereby making an enemy to the death, was clerk. The malcontents were all with the deacon. The easy-going had their names in his book, and would be afraid to back down. The young people were out of town.

So the battle drew near. And for the millionth time in history, big and little, oligarchy, represented in this case by



the deacon and his closely-knit clique, and democracy, represented by a miscellaneous collection of ordinary folks, led, if led at all, by an ignorant, passionate, and highly vulnerable man, were to try their respective strengths. Right and wrong had come to grips again.

At eight o'clock, when Mr. Hopkins rose and gave out the first hymn, the Sunday-school room in the basement of the church was already comfortably filled, and there were unaccustomed faces—people from the highways and byways of the town. Deacon Withers was surprised; but his confidence was not shaken.

On the front bench, in the amen corner dedicated to himself, sat the deacon. About him was his clique, who would second his motions, and vote as he wanted them to. Half way down the aisle at the end of the bench, his smallest child on his lap, sat Bill McCorkle, next to him, face pale, sat Molly, while the remainder of the family straggled off like red-carpeted stair steps. In the aisle near their master lay the two setter dogs, who had followed him all day, and had trailed him here, though he had left them at the livery stable.

Now and then Bill passed an enormous hand over his beard. Never before had he been to prayer meeting, or attended a business meeting of the church. Of parliamentary proceedings he knew exactly nothing. Now he was trembling with the greatest fear he had ever known—fear of his own inadequacy to rise to his feet and speak for his friend.

True, he had made a speech on Jeff Davis, and another on the Constitution of the United States. But on both these occasions he had been fortified in a way he was not fortified now. Behind him the crowd, who looked to him for leadership, must have sensed his agitation. For in the main they seemed apologetic, out of place, ashamed.

Mr. Hopkins's face was grave as he went through the services. He knew now the sword that hung over him and his family. At supper time a neighbor had run in, hurried out, leaving him and his wife with supper unfinished before them. It took courage for the minister, a sensitive man, to



go through the service. Now and then he glanced at his senior deacon, listening with apparent attentiveness. He saw the narrowed eyes, the thin mouth, the face without mercy. Somehow he managed to get through, though his hand trembled when he turned the pages of the Bible. Then he announced the business meeting to follow, asked Mr. Crump to take the chair, and quietly and quickly left. As he passed down the aisle, his heart went out to his hunting companion sitting with a child in his lap, and his dogs at his side, pulling his beard. Poor old faithful scout.

From the time the business meeting opened Bill's heart was in his mouth. He heard the few routine matters disposed of in a dry, matter-of-fact way. Then the moderator, clearing his throat, asked if there were any other matters to come before them. With the rising of Withers, the fight was on.

The face of the deacon as he took his place in front of the gathering was sorrowful but firm. His manner carried with it a certain kind of conviction, not without its effect even on the crowd that ought to have known him. The time had come, he said, when they must deal with a very painful matter—so painful that he had asked—ahem—for guidance.

Here he was interrupted. Other members of the church were coming in—and they were *not* the people whose names had been on the deacon's notebook! The rear aisles were filling, and in the entry was the sound of whispering. Bill looked around. With trembling hands he set the small child on Molly's lap, and then in some way, he couldn't tell how, he was on his feet.

But his voice, usually so hearty and confident, sounded to him like another man's, almost like an old woman's, and he was aware that he was smiling foolishly. He had, in the preliminaries, picked up at least one parliamentary word.

"I move," he said, "I move that the meetin' go upstairs whar these folks kin find seats an' set down."

He was aware that somebody behind him timidly seconded the motion. Then Brother Withers was on his feet. He spoke sternly, a ring in his voice:

"The main auditorium has always been used exclusively



for the worship of God. It has never been profaned by a business transaction of any kind. The church does not propose at this late day to—”

“Brother McCorkle’s motion is out of order,” ruled little Mr. Crump.

Bill sat down. The steam roller had passed smoothly over him, and Deacon Withers was going on with his speech.

It was a skillful speech. For a long time, he declared, he had felt, and others who had their hearts as well as their names in the church, had felt, that the time had come for a change. Nobody could esteem, even love, Brother Hopkins more than he. But that esteem and love must not blind him, nor them, to the fact that the church was suffering. Brother Hopkins, though a kind man, was not as circumspect as a chosen vessel of the Lord should be. He was given to worldly pleasures and to worldly, even unworthy, associates. This fact had sorely grieved him and all those who loved the church, and who felt that a minister of the Gospel should keep himself, as the Good Book said, unspotted of the world. He moved, therefore, however painful it was to him to do so, that a committee be appointed at once, that very night, to call on the pastor and request—his resignation—assuring him that their hearts would go with him—their hearts and their prayers.

Again, Old Bill was on his feet.

“Mr. Moderator,” he pleaded, still smiling.

The ruling of Crump was instantaneous:

“The chair doesn’t recognize Brother McCorkle.”

It was a mistake, that ruling. Or, rather, the parliamentary phrase in which it was couched was a mistake. Sudden anger flushed the mountaineer’s face as the smile left it. He took two steps down the aisle, and the voice that had started mountains echoing rang through the low-ceiled room.

“Don’t reckernize me? Here I been a-knowin’ you all your life and you me—an’ you set thar, Mr. Crump, an’ say you don’t reckernize me?”

“Sit down, sit down!” ordered Mr. Crump, and rapped the table with his gavel.

But Bill kept his feet, even if he did lose his head.



"I won't set down. I been sot on once, and I won't be sot on again. I'll have my say, and there ain't no use to pound with that thar hammer. Don't reckernize me? I reckon you'll reckernize me next time you see me."

Confusion followed, both in the front of the room and in the rear. In front Withers, Crump, and Saunders held a conference, in which the word "police" was heard. Molly, as she afterward declared, "come mighty nigh faintin'," and one of the dogs growled and looked around with bewildered shining eyes.

So much for the confusion in front. In the rear it was caused by the arrival of the young people. They were finding places along the wall and in the aisles. It was Jack Crump who spoke, wild Jack Crump. At his voice, people looked around amazed. And in all the queer things that followed, nothing was queerer than the part that Jack Crump played.

"Mr. Moderator," he said, addressing his own father, impersonally, but with a sort of tenderness in his voice, "a crowd of us, we regret to say, has arrived late, through no fault of our own. Would you kindly tell us what question is up for discussion, and what has happened so far?"

There was another whispered conference, in which old Mr. Crump plainly showed his agitation. All his life he had been trying to get Jack to come to church, and now he wished him anywhere else *but* in church. It was Withers who did the explaining. He did not fear these youngsters; but under the circumstances it might be impolitic to refuse them. The explanation was almost word for word a repetition of his former speech. The church had decided that Brother Hopkins's usefulness was past. A motion had just been made to appoint a committee to call on Brother Hopkins, when Mr. McCorkle here, in a most violent, unseemly, and ignorant way, had interrupted.

"Mr. McCorkle's a member of the church, isn't he?" asked Jack, advancing down the aisle; and though his face when he spoke to his father had been kindly now his black eyes were shining.



"Yes!" retorted Withers; "he's a member—after a fashion!"

"Then he has a right to speak on any motion in this church, hasn't he?"

"In due time—yes—and with due respect—yes!"

"But you said," persisted Jack, "that a motion had been put. Now, according to my information in such matters, after the motion is put and before it is voted on, is the time given for discussion. I move that Mr. McCorkle be allowed to speak."

"Second the motion," came from the crowd.

"The motion is out of order," ruled Mr. Crump, losing his head.

In the room, now packed, a murmur was rising—a murmur not loud but deep. Withers heard it and sensed its meaning. About the table he and Hulsizer and Saunders held another hurried, whispered conference. Then Withers nodded at Crump.

"The chair recognizes Brother McCorkle," he ruled.

Old Bill had remained on his feet during the proceedings, listening eagerly. Now, with every eye upon him, he advanced to the front. A strange, barbaric figure he made in that little Sunday-school room, his unkempt hair and beard glistening copper under the lights, his clothes coarse and unpressed, his dogs at his side. Molly had tried to stop the dogs, but they stuck close to their master's heels. He was their rock of ages, and where he went they would follow.

Withers had resumed his seat in his accustomed corner, and was eying him craftily, with a dry, confident smile. The decision to allow the mountaineer to speak was not giving way, but merely a change of tactics. The steam-roller having failed to crush him, now turned off down a side street, and came on him from behind.

For the conference had resulted in a plan: The ex-moon-shiner was in himself the best kind of argument. He would of course make an ignorant, ridiculous harangue. Then Withers would rise and pick that harangue to pieces. He would call attention to the man's past life; he would attack his character. He would demand of the audience whether



a man for whom Federal warrants had been issued was one to lead self-respecting, law-abiding Christians. He would appeal to their pride, their self-respect. He would ask them if they wanted their children to look up to a man who had defied the laws of his country and of God. Thus operating, the steam-roller would crush McCorkle.

But Old Bill, standing there though the room seemed to swim round him, realized more clearly than anyone else how vulnerable he was. He understood better than anyone else that he was not the man to lead in church. He knew what the deacon's smile meant. The room grew very quiet, waiting for him to speak. At his first words Withers's jaw dropped, and Joe Saunders opened his mouth as if he were about to sing a solo. For Old Bill wasn't making a speech at all.

"I come to town to-day," Bill began, "because I heard of this meetin'. I asked some of you to come here. I only wanted you to git together. I never expected to show *my* face. I went to see Captain Duncan to git him to lead. Whar was he? Out of town—gone on business for Mr. Withers here. Then I went to see Doctor Boyd. Whar was he? Gone to a convention that everybody in town knew about. The young folks that just come in—whar was they? Gone to a Sunday-school party. *Mebbe* it all just happened that way. *Mebbe* it didn't!"

"What do you mean?" cried Withers, springing to his feet so suddenly that the dogs looked at him with glassy eyes, and one of them growled.

"You jumped mighty quick, Mr. Withers," said McCorkle, "for a man that ain't hit. I'm speakin' now." He turned once more to the crowd: "I ain't goin' to take up for Mr. Hopkins," he said. "He wouldn't want me to. I can't make a speech nohow."

A ripple of smiles passed over the crowd. They were thinking of orations on Jeff Davis and on the Constitution of the United States. Bill saw the smiles and for just a moment his eyes twinkled. "*Mebbe* I could once," he said, "but I can't now.

"Anyway, I ain't no expert on religion. All I know about



it is that it's made a powerful change in me. And I know that afore the preacher come out and hunted with me and the other fellows in the mountains, we was a wilder bunch than we are now. That's the reason I come here to-night—because he's my friend, and because he made the mountains a sight better place to live in than they used to be.

"They's some folks that blames the preacher for associatin' with us, but seems to me I've heer'd that Jesus hisself was critticed for goin' with folks that warden't his equals.

"I can't say no mo', because I don't know no mo' to say. But I kin make a motion."

He paused a moment. "I move," he said, "that all them that wants Mr. Hopkins to stay on here, all them that believes he is doin' a good work in this town an' in these mountains, all them that believe he ain't been treated fair here to-night, stand up, and then set down. Then all them that wants him to leave, all them that believe he ain't doin' good, an' that there ain't been no underhand work here to-night, stand up, an' then set down!"

It was a bombshell in the camp of Withers. It was the very thing that Withers did not want. A moment of amazed silence, then, face white and eyes blazing, he was on his feet.

"I'll never submit to such a thing. Never! Never! It is unconsidered. It is ridiculous. It is—it is mob rule. Mob rule in the house of God!"

"The motion is out of order!" screamed Mr. Crump.

But it was the steam-roller that was out of order now. It could not run over all the people who rose, demanding the vote. In vain Withers fought for time. Years of resentment against him as a hard-driving trader, years of smoldering indignation, mingled with bewilderment at the way preachers were railroaded in, then railroaded out, had come to a head at last.

"I won't stand for this!" he cried, his shrill voice quavering.

"Are we to understand that you offer your resignation?" demanded Jack Crump.

A moment's hesitation, then the deacon spoke: "Yes!"



"I move his resignation be accepted," said Jack.

And now it was that Deacon Withers refused to see the game through. He grabbed his hat and walked down the aisle and out, his face full of scorn. He would start another church, a church he could rule, a church that would not harbor men with a past. Behind him followed Saunders and Hulsizer, and a few others. Another and a vaster steam-roller had passed over him and them.

And once more unorganized democracy had triumphed over oligarchy; once more right had conquered wrong, and the First Church of Mountain View was prepared to stand out as a new influence in the community, because it had purged itself of the small group who failed to understand the spirit of the religion that brought the church into being.

Of the original clique only little Mr. Crump remained. He stood by the table, his shoulders still erect—as they had not been for many years, but when he put the motion, his voice quavered:

"All those in favor of retaining Brother Hopkins please rise."

A moment's hesitation, then to a man the church rose. The members must have remembered a thousand acts of kindness and consideration, for there was no levity now on their faces.

A different committee from the one he was expecting called on Mr. Hopkins that night. With the committee went the greater part of the congregation, who crowded into the little yard, silver bright in the light of the moon. As the preacher and his wife, her face happy with a vast relief, shook hands, Hopkins eagerly looked for a face, and could not find it. But far up the long slopes of the mountains a wagon was toiling. On the front seat sat a bearded man driving, beside him a woman with a sleeping child on her lap, and behind trotted two setter dogs.

Jeff Bennet, whose cabin was on the side of the road along which that wagon was trailing, was long since asleep, and snoring the snore of the hearty mountaineer. But suddenly his sleep was disturbed by a lusty yell that echoed from a mountain crag, and then echoed faintly from another. Wild



Bill, in the exuberance of his spirit and in his glory that his preacher friend had been saved from the deacon, just couldn't restrain his feelings, now that he was back again in his mountains.

"Well, who'd a thought it," Jeff muttered to himself as he heard that yell. "Old Bill must 'a' been tiltin' the jug again!" He went to the door to make sure, and out in front he saw *not* the Wild Bill McCorkle of the old days sitting astride his horse; instead of that, he saw Bill and all his family in their wagon.

"Hey, Jeff!" shouted the bearded giant, "I jest stopped by to tell you to get ready for a big hunt next Monday. I reckon the preacher'll be comin' out, and we'll go up the ridge after them turkeys."

"All right," answered Jeff, "I'll jine you," and he went back to his bed with a smile on his face, for he knew that the preacher's friends had won the fight.

"I mought of knowed they would," he explained to his wife, "when I seen how turrible Bill was worked up."



## VIII

### The Biography of Blade

By ZONA GALE

*Selected by* CARL VAN DOREN, *Century*

"Born in Muscoda. Attended public school in Muscoda. Edited 'The Muscoda Republic' for twenty-five years." Blade had written his biography for the county history. He walked to his home and thought: "It's good. Not many men in the hundred millions are much better off."

He passed the house of Herron, his banker, and heard singing. A woman's voice was singing in a foreign tongue. He walked slowly and listened. In the evening sunlight the banker's house, his lawn, his Bridal Wreath looked luminous. The air thinned and thickened as cloud and wind wove their uneven ovals. The voice sang on. Blade felt abrupt and obscure happiness. His complacency deepened. "Pretty good. Not many men in the hundred millions are much better off."

At his home, about his table, his family gathered: the woman, all her life of Muscoda, whom he had married; their four children, contentious, smelling of toilet soap; his mother, silent and prevalent. His wife, who seemed to be dining only *en route* to real occupation, said:

"Mrs. Herron has asked you and mother and me to hear somebody sing there to-night. I can't go; I'm too tired." Without looking at her, Blade answered, "I'll go to the Herrons'," and his mother said that she would go. His wife, going on with her inner routine, lapsed back into speech with, "There isn't a thing in the house for breakfast."

About them countless cloudy influences surged, the melting west, the blue dusk, heightened sounds from the open.



The room was a theater of airy action. Less than this were the steak, the apple-pie, the general argument about the pronunciation of "slough," or, as they rose, that soft flatulence in the throat of his mother. In the redundant din of dishes, in the clamor of Blade calling for assistance, the faint unearthly splendor died to earthly darkness.

In a night gentle, leisurely, already experimenting with darkness, Blade and his mother went forth. The Herron lawn offered odor of sycamore and wild grape. Blade breathed it, felt happiness, and said to his mother:

"That new county history's coming out. Wonder if you'll like what it says about me." Under the porch lights the fallen muscles of her large face lifted.

In the Herrons' rooms, so regular, so inevitable, the guests gathered. The moquette, the mohair, the mahogany, received them. They were business men and their wives, the accustomed, the dutiful, the numb. There was a rote of jest, of retort, of innuendo. There were the thrilling potentialities and the deathly routine of being. All were tumultuously aware of the little fountain of life within themselves.

At their abrupt, embarrassed hush, Blade saw near the piano the Herrons' niece. Her beautiful shoulders, her body cased in blue, her slow, floating voice, invaded him. In her he saw and heard all youth, all that is luminous, all that is different. Upon Blade invisible hands laid hold. With soft violence he was claimed, carried, torn. "What's this?" he felt, and had never felt so much. For the first time his importance, his newspaper, his home, his family, were out-distanced. He saw that this woman lived in another way than his way, and it was her way that he wanted.

At the close of her singing, he approached her. She spoke to him casually, and he thought that there must be some mistake. Could she not see that of all those in the room he it was to whom she had signaled? He felt that he was crying: "Where are you? I understand. In God's name, throw me a rope!" Instead he was saying: "You sing like a bird, Miss Herron. Much obliged, I'm sure. I—" When others intervened, he waited for a long time by the piano, the stout, smiling man. At length he found his opportunity, and



said to her, "I used to play 'second flute myself.'" But he wondered whether, after all, he could have said this aloud, because she only glanced and smiled, though with that information he had sent her something vast and pleading. He did not have another chance to address her.

Out on the street his mother said, "My dinner did n't set well"; but Blade, in some powerful onslaught of the unknown, made no reply and hurried brutally.

He took a blanket and lay on the grass. There was no change in the trees or the frogs of Muscoda. There they were, true to the past. But they were new to Blade, and so were the stars. It was perhaps the seventeen-thousandth night of his life, and yet it was the first. He was feeling: "Say, music! I've always cottoned to it; but look what it *is*! Look what it *does*!" Next door a second-floor window glowed. There Edgerton, dying, lay expecting to recover. Every one knew save Edgerton. Blade had been sorry, but now he was seized and shaken by the fact that there was Edgerton, dying and not knowing. With this fact Blade quivered as occasionally, toward dawn, he had quivered with remorse or with worry. He experienced Edgerton. Then he experienced delight that he himself was not dying. The pang of Miss Herron and her singing returned and returned, powerful, possessing, and at last excluding.

At daybreak he woke. Long, loose pulsations of light shook him. Was it light or was it song? He sat on his blanket and looked up from the well of his garden to the sky. He thought: "I'm going to take music lessons. I'll go and see Miss Herron to-day, talk with her about it." Countless cloudy influences surged round the lawn, where was a theater of changing light and airy action. For the first time in his life he saw the morning.

At breakfast his passion for spiritual isolation caused suspicion. "You act as if you're going to risk some more money," said his mother. "Better not." And his wife asked acutely, "What woman was there last night?" So that Blade thundered, "Can't I have quiet in my own house?" The children discreetly tittered. With a wave of nostalgia it came to Blade that by his words of thunder he had in some



way cut himself off from Miss Herron. In order to get back to that world of Miss Herron, he spoke gently to his wife.

His first act at the office was to request the return of his biography copy from the editor of the county history. Blade said, "I can liven mine up a lot." It had come to him that he had written a biography which did not express his life, so rich and so potential. And now the office routine began—routine, but yet extraordinary. A pearly shadow drenched the bare room. Or was it that? You moved the radio a fraction of an inch, and you had a new wave length. Blade had a new wave length. Nothing contacted in the old way. The men of the staff of the composing-room, he saw them with incredible intensity, Johns, Lubbock, Mayhew, Platt, in their dirty ticking aprons, with rolled gold rings on the little fingers of inky hands swinging from the elbow. Had Blade ever really seen them until now? He felt in some delicious suspension; or was it balance? Exquisitely rested, he felt, and as if everything were simple. He said to one or two: "Do you know, music is a great thing. For a fact. Wish I'd kept on with second flute that time." He spoke in excitement such that, had they known of a tragedy involving Blade later in the day, they would have remembered. But they did not know of the tragedy.

At eleven o'clock he called the Herrons' house. He waited at the telephone and was rocked on the waves of his expectation. A voice came: "Oh, Miss Herron? Oh, Miss Herron left this morning for her home. Who is this calling, please?" Blade mumbled: "'Muscoda Republic.' Thanks for the item." He groped to the door and stared up and down the street, but she was not passing.

He went at noon to the Muscoda Marble Counter for lunch. The place was clean, the food was good, the women who presided were perfect at their rites. Before the oil-cloth-covered counter Blade sat, and he felt the physical nausea and the shivering of a young animal at night, homeless.

And at night he stayed so long at the office, alone, that Muscoda main street was empty. At his own gate it came



to him that he wanted his mother. He was glad that there was a light in her room. He tapped, and sidled toward her, intent on his nameless and infinite loss. Vast and shapeless in her red-and-black checked bath-robe, she sat among her plants and bottles and regarded him without change of expression. She commented: "I thought you were going to take me to the picture show to-night." He stood stricken, not by his failure, but by hers. He mumbled and withdrew, and in the passage his wife met him, put her arms about him, whispered, "Nobody loves you as I do!" This should have surprised him, but he was not listening. His soul heard, and cried, "What of it?"

In the night he saw Edgerton's window glowing. Blade felt sorry, an impression now, not an emotion. He woke to the sun and said, "Another fine day," a formula, not a feeling. He went to his office, and the men were pale fellows, inky, disheveled, remote. He faced the blind wall of human loneliness. He was as one who, expecting to be born, is still-born, and becomes aware not of the cradle, but of eternity.

In a few days Blade appeared before Montgomery, the Muscoda band leader, and said:

"Say, I used to play the second flute myself. And I wondered—"

When "one-night stands" come to Muscoda Opera House, Blade sits in the orchestra and plays the second flute. His detached wife and his grown children come to the Opera House plays, and afterward they ask him why he will deliberately make himself ridiculous by playing in the band. He does not know what to reply and takes refuge in irritability.

In the Muscoda County history Blade's biography, in fine print, stands unread in many little libraries: "Born in Muscoda. Attended public school in Muscoda. Has edited 'The Muscoda Republic' for twenty-five years." To the editor of that history Blade had returned his biography copy without change, and had said:

"I don't know what it was I was going to add. Whatever the item was, it got away from me."



## IX

### Loutré

By LISA YSAYE TARLEAU

*Selected by* THOMAS B. WELLS, *Harper's*

Aristide Tritou stood at the window of his gray and cheerless room and looked out into the dreary dullness of a dark November day. The weather was truly unfortunate: not exactly cold but—ever so much worse—damp and chilly; the rain which hung all ready in the skies would presently fall down, blur the window-panes, run in dirty streaks down the sills, and add to the general misery of the scene.

"Oh, hang it all," muttered Aristide, "hang it all." And throwing himself on his rather rickety couch-bed, he began to ruminate about the weather. Poor people, he decided, ought to live in a land of eternal summer. Tahiti. Vailima. Anywhere, where the earth is kindly and the sun gives you warmth and cheer, fills your veins with a sweet fire, and permits you to dream away idly and languorously long and golden hours. To live in such an infernal climate as ours one must at least have money. Then one can sit by a blazing fire and enjoy an artificial summer; one can light one's room and have a splendid lamp like a personal sun at the table, and some old wine, sipped slowly and dreamily, would provide sweet fire for the veins. Substitutes, of course, but oh, what charming ones! Only one had to be able to pay for them. Well, he was not able to do so. He had not a sou.

"Damn it!" he shouted, while he jumped up from his bed, "damn it, where can I get some money?"

He ran in his mind over the list of his friends, but the outlook was poor; most of them had nothing themselves,



and to those who had even a little bit he was already a debtor. Then he thought of Pierre de Kersac, the editor of *La Revue Illustrée*. If he could get a few francs out of him. Just the price of a good meal and an evening in a café. It would be difficult—Kersac had been rather cool lately—twice he had refused him a loan. But then, there was nobody else. Evidently he would have to try Kersac.

Aristide began to lace his shoes, preliminary to his venturing forth to capture the golden fleece, and while he did so he thought of a thousand things which he meant to tell Kersac in justification of the demand for a loan. They were all splendid inventions, some beautifully simple, some highly ornate and elaborate, but Aristide had to discard one after the other. No, they would not do; Kersac was already wise to the game; he would not fall for any of these gabs. Well, he had to trust to the inspiration of the moment. He straightened his back, stretched his long limbs, and took a somewhat faded hat from a shelf in the closet.

"At least," he sneered, "I have not painfully to decide whether or not I shall put on my rubbers. I have no rubbers to put on. Life is full of delightful compensations."

When Aristide reached the office of *La Revue Illustrée* he had first to face an impudent office boy, who requested him to fill out a card stating whom he wanted to see and for what purpose, and who asked him, furthermore, many unnecessary and highly annoying questions. But Aristide's inventive genius was equal to the emergency of the moment. He filled out the card, demanding to see some sub-editor and, while the office boy sauntered away, Aristide strode boldly into the sanctuary of the chief, Monsieur de Kersac. Kersac looked ill pleased when Aristide appeared in the door.

"Tritou," he actually snarled, "who the devil let you in? That boy out there ought to be fired. I am swamped with work—I can't see anybody."

But Aristide, who was already seated in one of the deep and soft *fauteuils*, stretching his long legs in front of him, said amiably:



"Put your work aside. I came, my dear Kersac, to bestow a favor upon you."

Kersac muttered something of *Timeo Danaos*, but Aristide did not permit him to finish the quotation.

"We all know your classical erudition, my dear fellow," he smiled, "but what I bring is not the doubtful present of wily Greeks. I bring you the gift of the Magi. Even more than that: something more precious than gold, myrrh, and frankincense. I bring you a marvelous, perfect, delightful *conte*. Something exquisite for your exquisite magazine."

But Kersac was only a little mollified.

"I'll tell you, Tritou," he said, "your *contes* are all right, but we have already run a lot of them. And, frankly, in the end they are all the same. Again and again you give us fools who think they fool one another and only fool themselves; again and again you show us the futility, the utter uselessness, the ironic emptiness of life and fate. Now mind you, I don't say that your stuff isn't good. It's clever. Damnably clever. But one gets easily fed up on it. That cynical pessimism is all right now and then, but the public doesn't want too much of it. We have to give them more constructive stuff, a saner outlook, a—what shall I say? . . ."

Aristide smiled mockingly. "My dear fellow," he interrupted, "if you were not an editor but a writer you might have told me in two words what you want to say. You do not want cleverness in your magazine, you want wisdom. Well, it's just what I'm going to offer you. My *conte* is not merely clever, it's in addition deep, profound, powerful, startlingly unusual and surprisingly human—in one word: a gem. I'm going to tell you my plot and you will see."

Kersac saw that he could not escape, so he relaxed in his chair, yawned deeply and sleepily, and said:

"Well, go ahead, go ahead. I'm listening."

Aristide shook his hair back from his forehead, took a cigarette from Kersac's desk without waiting for an invitation and, when he had lighted it, began in his most deep and sonorous voice:

"Permit me to introduce to you Loutr  . Loutr   is a criminal; not a romantic criminal but a sordid one. He



preys on the weak and helpless; he lives on his women. Now and then he does a little blackmail. Anything, in short, that pays well and is safe. Because Loutré is a coward. Despite his splendid physique—you must imagine him over six feet tall and decidedly handsome—despite his splendid physique, I say, he is as yellow as they make them. Never takes a risk. Always out to save his skin. Would betray anything and anybody unscrupulously if he sees his advantage in it, and is consequently despised by the police as well as by his fellow criminals. Only women fall for him. As I told you, he is a handsome devil.

"One day the *Matin*, having nothing else to do, runs a series of articles about the crime wave, and in consequence the police get busy. The usual thing, you know. Raids, arrests, investigations, and so forth. Crime becomes less profitable and more dangerous than ever. And Loutré hates every danger. He decides, therefore, to leave his old haunts and his chosen associates and to disappear for a while. To do something else. But what? Suddenly he remembers a certain girl who had been arrested for shoplifting and sentenced to the Reformatory. Somebody had told him only lately that this girl had gone into the movies and was making a lot of money. He determines to find out with what company she is working, and so he does. One fair morning he accosts that poor girl on her way to the studio, and in his best blackmailing manner he put the proposition before her! 'Either you get me a position with your company, or I'll tell what I know.' I'll spare you all the details of the dickering—sufficient to say, he gets what he demands. He is introduced as a relative of the girl and the director gives him a tryout. And by a queer chance Loutré does well. He screens quite wonderfully, and his gestures have a savage, natural effectiveness which is most astounding. Loutré becomes thus at once a full-fledged screen actor, and as he is really good-looking they make him play the heroes.

"Every day now he rescues Innocence out of the clutches of Vice; every day he succors the Poor; every day he withers the Villain with his proud silence; every day, in short, he is more virtuous than Sir Galahad in person. And since this



virtue pays, he enjoys it. His salary becomes ever more fantastic, his contracts ever more favorable, his name more and more a household word in this movie-mad world of ours. And that goes on for years. And then suddenly comes a crash. He is involved in some scandal. A hotel affair. Too much wine, too much drugs, too much everything, and a girl dies. And Loutr , the idol of the public, becomes an outcast. His contracts are not renewed, his pictures are no longer booked, he is done for. He drops out. From one day to another he is forgotten. Nothing is left for him but to return to his former life!"

Aristide paused, and reached for another cigarette. Kersac shoved the box over to him, and even gave him a light. "Well," he asked, "and what then?"

"Then," explained Aristide, "begins the real tragedy. Loutr  finds out that one cannot be virtuous for years without paying for it in the end. One cannot constantly parade as a hero and be afterward successful as a villain. Poor Loutr  cannot bully his women any more—for too long a time his cue was to protect and to defend them. Even at blackmail he is now a failure. Why, he is constantly tempted to take himself by the scruff of the neck and to hand himself over to the police! He has done it over and over again with his partners who were cast for this thankless r le. Thus he deteriorates and goes to pieces—a helpless victim of stern and pitiless virtue."

Kersac smiled a bit. "Musset says: '*On ne badine pas avec l'amour*'—'One must not toy with love'; your opinion evidently is: '*On ne badine pas avec la vertu*'."

Aristide nodded. "One must not toy idly with, or for that matter at, any emotion without paying some price for it. In the end you feel what you pretend to feel, you become what you play at being. At this point, you see, my little *conte* gains breadth, depth, perspective. I refer, then, not only to the results of modern psychology—Cou , you know, autosuggestion, the subconscious self, and so on—but also bring in ancient occult beliefs, significant hints out of the childhood of mankind. Have you ever read Frazer's monumental work, *The Golden Bough*? Just look up the chapter



on Imitative Magic—how the Imitator becomes the Very Thing he imitates. That's something stupendous, something thrilling. And all this is worked in somehow. Just as background, you know. Atmosphere. I'll tell you, Kersac, that Loutré thing will go big. It will make some hit. And now say that I'm not good to you."

"Well," retorted Kersac, "to write for *La Revue Illustrée* is, after all, not such a sacrifice. But anyway, don't let's scrap about it. Just give me the story and I'll write you a check."

"Why no," said Aristide with a rather engaging smile, "just give me a check and I'll write you the story."

Kersac stared blankly at the impudent visitor.

"You mean to say," he asked, "that the story isn't done at all?"

Aristide became at once voluble. "Done? What do you mean by done? Have I shown you Loutré? Have I created him? Does he live? You were ready to accept him—that's proof enough. All that remains to be done is the mere mechanical work of writing the thing down. But to do that I need a warm room, a meal, some cigarettes, even paper and a typewriter ribbon. And I happen to be out of all these commodities. So for your sake, simply to be able to provide your magazine with a splendid success, I am willing to accept an advance. That Loutré stuff is worth five hundred francs, isn't it? Well, give me two hundred francs now and you'll get the manuscript to-morrow."

Kersac was furious. "I won't give you a red sou until I have the story," he shouted. "I know you too well."

Aristide shrugged his shoulders. "Suit yourself," he said nonchalantly. "I am not so fond of life that I should care if I prolong it for a while or not. For my part I should starve. It was for your sake that I wished to keep alive and to write you a howling success. But it's up to you, of course."

Kersac looked utterly disgusted.

"I'll give you twenty francs," he growled, "not a sou more."

Aristide shook his head. "It has to be two hundred or nothing," he insisted.



"Then it will be nothing," said Kersac in a tone of utter finality.

Aristide got up and went to the door; he went very slowly, to give Kersac a chance to change his mind, and his heart sank when the editor busied himself among his papers without making any move. Aristide had already turned the handle and his hopes were at their lowest ebb when Kersac called him back. "Here," he said, "take a hundred francs and go to the devil."

And while Aristide pocketed the money, he added sternly: "And mind you, I want this manuscript to-morrow. I might run it in the New Year's number."

Aristide was nearly dancing with delight when he left the offices of *La Revue Illustrée*. Oh, what luck, what luck, what splendid, unheard-of, spectacular luck! He would have been happy with ten francs, well satisfied with five, and now he had a hundred. The whole world seemed to him suddenly golden; the sky was diffused with a mellow light; Paris was again the most delectable city, and he felt the mad desire to laugh idiotically into the face of every passer-by. Well, he assured himself after a few steps, this stroke of fortune was not quite undeserved. *Loutré* was really not a half-bad invention. One could do something effective with that plot; he was almost tempted to write the story down. But then, who wants to work with a hundred francs in his pocket, who wants to write when he can live? And he would live now—he would enjoy himself gorgeously and forget the lean weeks. Aristide, who usually slouched a bit, stretched himself to his full height and looked the world triumphantly in the face. And in this somewhat operatic attitude of a conquering hero, he met Monsieur Fabian Felix, the great illustrator, who was evidently bound for *La Revue Illustrée*.

Aristide had not much love for Fabian Felix, who was small, slim, dark, very oriental, and unbearably successful. There was not an editor who would not congratulate himself when he could display in his magazine one of Felix's distinctive drawings, and to be illustrated one day by F. F.



was something every aspiring young author dreamed of. All this irritated Aristide, and whenever he met Felix he showed clearly that he despised some one who earned so outrageously much money. But to-day he felt no grudge against Felix. To-day he himself had a hundred francs in his pocket. To-day he was a fellow-capitalist. He waved a friendly greeting to the little man and strode on into the flickering lights of the darkening November day.

Felix went really to *La Revue Illustrée* and was at once respectfully ushered into the office of Monsieur de Kersac. And while the two looked over the proofs of some illustrations, Felix said casually:

"I met young Tritou downstairs. He seemed in a very genial mood. He was almost polite to me, and usually he treats me with marked displeasure."

Kersac laughed. "Oh, well," he declared, "Tritou is a fool, and yet I'll tell you, Felix, that boy has some talent. If he only were not so damnably lazy, I could make something out of him. He's doing a fine story for us now. *Loutré's* the name of it. Tells of some apache who becomes an actor and plays the virtuous hero so long that he is utterly spoiled for the life of vice. The thing sounded great when he told it to me—it has atmosphere, background. It's deep, profound. He works in modern psychology, Coué and so on; and in addition to it ancient beliefs, imitative magic, childhood of mankind, and so forth. It's popular and scientific at the same time, and usually that goes big. If it turns out all right I might ask you to illustrate it, and we'll feature it in the New Year's number. Perhaps we can stretch it through two issues. I'll see how the thing looks. No harm in giving that fellow a show."

"Certainly, why certainly," agreed Felix, who was a kind-hearted little man, "I'll be glad to help along. And I am really pleased that that young chap has found himself. We need young talent, Kersac. The old masters are all well and good for To-day, but To-morrow belongs to Youth." And very delighted with this epigram, which he fondly believed to be first rate, he trotted on.



It was foggy but the threatening rain hung still in the skies, and as Felix felt that he needed some exercise he sent away his car, which had called for him, and walked to his apartment near the Parc Monceau. On his way he met Berthe Morissey, who once had been a sharp-witted, slim young girl, and who was now a sharp-tongued, thin young wife of a most unsuccessful Neo-Catholic playwright. She greeted Felix very effusively—she adored and envied successes—and at once began to tell her woes. The managers were all unjust, the actors all unreasonable, and Charles deplorably lacking in ambition. Always writing mystical things that did not go or were not accepted, always sitting in the cafés instead of visiting the right kind of people, always wasting his time instead of working and making connections. Felix listened sympathetically but he felt decidedly bored and, after a while, just to get away, he petted her hand and said:

"Never mind, Berthe, never mind. Charles will find himself. They all do in the end. Now, there is that Aristide Tritou; you know him, he is a friend of your husband, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Berthe acidly. "A lazy good-for-nothing. He owes us five francs."

"Well," said Felix smiling, "he's making his way now. He's doing a fine thing for *La Revue Illustrée*. The name of it is *Loutré*, and Kersac was most impressed by it. He tells me that it is a combination of a very effective popular story and a very profound treatise on modern and ancient psychology. Coué, you know, and so on, and then imitative magic, primitive beliefs out of the childhood of mankind. Utterly interesting. Something like the things Lafitte publishes. Kersac wants me to illustrate it, and perhaps he'll run it through several issues. So you see, Berthe, if Tritou made the grade, Charles surely will. Don't worry."

Felix meant well, but he did not understand women. Berthe was neither heartened nor encouraged by Tritou's success: she was utterly enraged by it. And while she hurried home her inflamed imagination magnified this success, and the more she magnified it, the greater became her rage.



She was absolutely burning with indignation when she opened the door of her little apartment, and as soon as she found Charles she emptied over his head the vials of her wrath.

"Here you're sitting and smoking and doing nothing, and everybody else makes a success," she scolded. "Even that Aristide Tritou, that fool, that nobody, gets somewhere, becomes something; only you are a failure."

Charles was so accustomed to her reproaches that usually he hardly answered, but when she mentioned Tritou he became interested.

"Aristide," he asked, "what happened to him?"

"Happened," sneered Berthe, "nothing happened. Things never happen. He did something. He wrote a most wonderful book. I met Fabian Felix on the street, and he told me all about it. He illustrated it, *La Revue Illustrée* ran it serially, and Lafitte published it. The name of it is *Loutré*, and it is something stupendous. Not only popular but scientific. Full of psychology, and Coué, and imitative magic, and primitive beliefs, and all such things. He is bound to get the Prix Goncourt for it."

"Well, well," said Charles, "that's fine. I am surprised and I am glad too. So old Aristide is a made man. A book illustrated by Felix, that means something. And Lafitte as a publisher is not so bad either. And did you say it was mentioned for the Prix Goncourt? If I had his address I'd write the old boy a word of congratulation. Well, don't be so furious about it, Berthe. His luck does not make us any poorer."

But Berthe was not in a mood to reason. She banged the door, crashed the dishes into the kitchen sink, and cried bitter tears of envy and resentment in her disappointment and loneliness.

Aristide could have lived quietly for a month on his hundred francs; comfortably for two weeks; luxuriously for a few days. But he preferred to spend them gloriously in one night. So that the next morning he was almost as poor as ever before, only that now there was no more Kersac



out of whom one could get some money. With Kersac, Aristide was done. He would not dare to show his face to the editor for at least six months. In the meantime winter would come and his needs would increase. There was to-day already a sharp tang in the air and Aristide shivered in his threadbare clothes. With infinite disgust he decided that he would have to look out for some work.

Fate was merciful to Aristide and the work was found. A small, old-fashioned publisher—an Alsatian by birth, Monsieur Frederic Mondell, whose specialty was textbooks for primary schools, books on domestic science, needlework, applied arts, home decoration, and, as a hobby, books of poetry—needed a reader and office assistant, and Aristide secured the position. His happiness was not unalloyed: the salary was small, the hours rather long, and Monsieur Mondell insisted annoyingly on punctual attendance. But the income was secure, and Aristide felt that now he could face the chill blasts of the coming frost with a certain degree of comfort and confidence.

Thus, Aristide tramped every morning to the office, wrote business letters in which the subtle excellencies of his style were utterly wasted, read manuscripts which bored him beyond measure, and corrected proofs whose main mistake in his eyes were that they were printed at all. Sometimes he discussed literature with Monsieur Mondell, both smoking like chimneys, both declaiming their own poetry, both quarreling violently and being, in consequence, infinitely pleased with each other. Supper the two usually had together in a little Alsatian restaurant where the cooking was so good that the waitress could be unattractive, and after supper Aristide trudged home and read. He had always been a voracious reader, the fellowship of books meaning more to him than any other relation, and this winter, having just enough for the immediate necessities of life and no extra money to spend in cafés and cabarets, he read more than ever before. His former haunts knew him no more. Sometimes he thought sleepily and lazily of going to the Trois Couronnes, the special rendezvous of all the budding literati, but he had to be at the office so very early in the morning



and his purse was so damnably lean. It was better to postpone the visit. So the weeks went by.

At the Trois Couronnes the regular guests were usually so taken up with their own interests that they did not give much thought to those who, for one reason or another, dropped out. But Aristide had been quite popular; his facile wit and his amusing cynicism combined with a certain personal charm had won him many friends, and when one week after the other passed and no Tritou was to be seen, his comrades began to wonder.

"What the devil happened to that Aristide?" they said. "Is he ill? One does not see him any more."

One evening Charles Morissey was present when that question was asked again, and he laughed, half amused, half bitterly.

"Of course one does not see him any more. We'll probably never see him again. Aristide is lost to us—he made a success."

Everyone was surprised and interested.

"Aristide a success? Who would have ever believed it. Who told you, Charles?"

"My wife told me," sighed Morissey. "In fact she tells me about it every day. She rubs it in as much as she can. She is quite jaundiced from envy, and if she hates anyone more than me, then it's surely Aristide."

"But what did he do that enrages her so?" was asked.

"Well, he wrote a book," reported Charles. "I haven't seen it; he forgot to send me a presentation copy and I have, God knows, no money for an edition de luxe with illustrations by Fabian Felix. But so much I can tell you, it's some grand thing he did. You know how we always laughed at him when he lugged those big Frazer books around, the *Golden Bough* series? Now it seems that he did his reading to some advantage. His book—the title of it is *Loutré*—is scientific fiction or fictionized science, whatever you will. He has worked in Coué—autosuggestion, subconscious personality; and then primitive beliefs, imitative magic, and so on. Very up-to-date and very effective. F. F. illustrated it, he told my wife all about it, it ran some time ago serially



in *La Revue Illustrée*, and Lafitte has published it. And to make the measure full, it was mentioned for the Prix Goncourt. Do you wonder we don't see him any more?"

The tidings were received with sympathy, regret, and envy. They rejoiced that a comrade had succeeded, but at the same time they knew only too well that, once famous, he was not a comrade any longer. They had lost him, not through death but through life, and this loss is much more final and depressing. And then there was a little envy blended into the complex of their emotions. Why just Aristide and not they? Why had luck just chosen that one and not another? Only Charles said hotly and honestly:

"I don't begrudge Aristide his success. Really I don't. What makes me mad is that he has dropped us all so promptly. He might have come round now and then to shake hands and talk over old times. He might have let us take part in his glory. He meant very much to me, that old Aristide, and I feel like breaking his neck for being so mean now. But well, I suppose that's the way they all get. Success spoils the character."

And then the guests of the Trois Couronnes settled down to their usual routine, and nobody spoke any more of Aristide.

Monsieur Frederic Mondell was a funny, rotund little man, with a bald head, myopic eyes, pudgy hands, and a waddling walk. His accent was ridiculous, his verses execrable, yet there lived no truer knight of the Nine Muses than this little impossible Alsatian. He loved and understood poetry and, what is rarer, he loved and understood poets. The most disreputable-looking young man who came to him with a manuscript of verses under his arm was certain to receive a hearing, and whenever Monsieur Mondell seemed to detect any talent he published without thinking of his personal advantage. All the profit he made out of his textbooks and cookbooks, and books on domestic science went into these little volumes of contemporary poetry which he issued with a pride and delight never accorded to his more profitable ventures. His friends sometimes argued with him



over the folly of so costly a hobby, but Mondell did not heed them. He was a bachelor—his personal needs were almost negligible, and, in the end, silencing every argument, he always declaimed his well-beloved Heine's warning:

*"Verletze nicht durch kalten Ton  
Den Juengling, welcher duerftig, fremd,  
Um Hilfe bittend zu Dir koemmt—  
Er ist vielleicht ein Goettersohn.  
Siehst Du ihn wieder einst, sodann  
Die Gloria sein Haupt unflammt;  
Den strengen Blick, der Dich verdammt,  
Dein Auge nicht ertragen kann."*

One fine morning in February such a potential "*Goettersohn*," a genius of the Trois Couronnes accosted Monsieur Mondell on the street, offering him an epic poem in three volumes. Monsieur Mondell trembled; he knew he would never say no, but he knew also that just at present the luxury of another unsalable book would be fatal to him. Very humanly he tried to escape the embarrassing situation without seeming really to do so, and he said encouragingly: "Just send me your manuscript. My reader, Monsieur Tritou, shall at once report about it."

The epic poet looked at Monsieur Mondell with wide eyes.

"Tritou," he asked, "do you mean Aristide Tritou? Is he your reader?"

"Yes," answered Monsieur Mondell, "do you know him?"

The other sighed.

"Ah, no, I don't know him. I don't know celebrities—as yet. But of course I know all about him. Who doesn't know the author of *Loutré*? It's really the book of the year. Lafitte was lucky to get it. Everyone says that the book itself is splendid and would sell even without the illustrations by Felix."

Mondell was dumbfounded. Why had that devil of a Tritou never mentioned his book? So much modesty was really too much of a virtue. But he hid his surprise and said only:



"Oh, was it Felix who did the illustrations?"

"Yes, yes," the poet assured him, "it ran serially in Kersac's *Revue Illustrée*, you know, and Felix and Kersac are intimate friends. And then the book is quite in Felix's line. Rather weird, you know, and very profound and interesting. Full of psychology—Coué, autosuggestion, subconscious-self; and folklore, imitative magic, primitive beliefs of mankind, and all such things. Quite up to date. No wonder it almost got the Prix Goncourt."

Mondell nodded sagely. "No wonder," he agreed. And shaking hands with his poet and promising anything and everything, he hurried posthaste to his office.

Monsieur Mondell hated "*les silences*"—silences that estranged and parted and that, once entered into, gained constantly in sinister power. It was well enough to be silent when you had said everything you had to say; then silence was comforting, sweet, uniting. But to be silent with an unsaid thing rankling in the mind was absolutely against his nature, and while he now made his way to his office, he decided to have it out at once with Aristide. Why had that boy been so reticent? Why, above all, if he had written a splendid book—why had he given it to another publisher? Was Pierre Lafitte really so much better an imprint than Frederic Mondell? Poor Monsieur Mondell felt slighted and was puzzled, and as he liked Aristide—liked him well enough, in fact, to quarrel violently with him—he felt, in addition, hurt. He had given his young reader full confidence and he had expected confidence in return. Well, he would hear what Aristide had to say.

He found Aristide in a cloud of tobacco smoke, leaning back in his chair, his feet on his desk, reading the galley proofs of a new Mondell publication. When Mondell entered Aristide looked up and yawned.

"Heavens, what rot," he said, "what miserable, insufferable, unendurable rot! How could you ever accept such a thing? *Building a Home*—if anyone were ever building me a home according to this book I'd kill him outright."

But Monsieur Mondell disdained to defend his new publi-



cation. He hung up his hat, seated himself in his swivel chair and, turning to Aristide, said bluntly:

"Tell me, Tritou, why did you never speak to me of *Loutré*?"

Aristide sat up in his chair and stared. *Loutré? Loutré?* What did Mondell mean? Then Aristide remembered and he became a bit embarrassed. Monsieur Mondell was of a most scrupulous personal honesty, and Aristide doubted if he would see the fun in cheating Kersac out of a hundred francs? Aristide decided therefore that he would have to invent some excuse—he dimly thought of a lost letter or something like this—and in order to gain time he asked:

"Why should I have spoken to you of *Loutré*?"

Monsieur Mondell became heated and excited.

"Well, if I had written a brilliant book, the book of the year in fact, a book illustrated by Felix and run as a serial in *La Revue Illustrée*, a book finally published by Lafitte and mentioned for the Prix Goncourt, then I should have spoken to you about it. Consequently, I should have expected the same of you."

Aristide was utterly bewildered. Did Mondell jest? But no, his round moonface looked almost childishly hurt and serious. But then, what did it all mean? Had *Loutré*, whom he had left ignominiously in the borderland of all half-created things, hanging doubtfully between being and not-being—had *Loutré*, without consulting his maker, decided on a career of his own? Well, in that case he had done himself well, the old boy. Felix, Lafitte, Prix Goncourt—one could hardly better that. A self-made fiction, chuckled Aristide to himself. Well, he would not disturb *Loutré* in his adventurous undertaking, he would not give the show away. So, while he was highly amused inwardly, he said aloud only:

"Who told you all about *Loutré*, Mondell?"

"That ass of a poet did," growled Mondell, "that Lucien Dupré. Wants me to publish his epic, and when I mentioned you as my reader he started to rave. The whole literary Paris, he says, is wild about your book. The occult science in it, the folklore, primitive beliefs, imitative magic, and so



on made a tremendous hit. Why you haven't offered the book to me, Tritou, I can't understand. I always thought we were real friends."

Aristide stood up, towered over the little publisher, and said very earnestly and impressively:

"Look here, Mondell, I don't know what Dupré said; quite likely he exaggerated. I confess Loutré was an unexpected success, but I never thought for a moment that he would stir the literary Paris. But so much you can take from me—I give you my word for it: Loutré was conceived and (he winced a bit) created before I ever knew you. I assure you most solemnly I could never have offered this work to you. There was no possibility of doing so. I should be damned sorry if you thought anything else."

Mondell, whose heart although covered by layers and layers of fat was innately generous, accepted at once his friend's explanation.

"That's quite all right, Aristide," he said. "There's no ill feeling in me now. Only I'm sorry. I should have liked to bring out this book. Well, we'll see what we can do in the future."

And having thus restored peace and harmony in the office, the two went at their daily task, Aristide still smiling to himself at Loutré and Loutré's extravagant claims.

The next morning Mondell said to Aristide:

"I'll tell you what, Tritou. We are going to get a new assistant. Some young chap to write letters, and read proofs, and to do all the odds and ends of the office routine. And to you I'm going to give a little private office here and you are going to write a book for me. Of course, you can't duplicate *Loutré*—one does not write a masterwork every few months—but you'll do something fine and I'm going to bring it out in style. I'd ask F. F. to illustrate it, only he is on his way to Japan, but we'll get Zip or Pierre Crachée to do us head and tail-pieces and perhaps even full-page drawings. Everyone will be pleased to collaborate with the author of *Loutré*."

Aristide shrugged his shoulders and said, "Suit yourself,"



and while Mondell bustled round in preparation for the new arrangement, Aristide cleared his old desk and wondered dimly if he had done right to let Loutré have his way.

The new reader was soon found and Aristide began his book. It was a little extravaganza—he called it *Fairy Tales for Worldly-Wise*—and in it he told the True Story of the Loss of Paradise, the Last Visit to Eden, The Real Tragedy of Eve, and similar things. All half-gay and half-sad, all more or less queer and fantastic, yet imbued with that inner and deeper truth—*la vraie vérité* as the Goncourts say—which has the brilliant reality of all unreal things. Mondell was not displeased; now and then something appealed to him especially, but even when he said, “Fine, fine,” he added invariably:

“Do you think it measures up to *Loutré*?”

Aristide, who was by this time tired and irritable, and therefore quite unreasonable, one day flared up:

“Look here, Mondell,” he shouted, “you stop that. I’m fed up with Loutré. I don’t want to hear anything more about him. I’m writing you the very best stuff I can—if that isn’t sufficient, don’t publish it.”

Mondell pacified his irate friend.

“You know I like your work,” he assured him again and again. “Only, of course, I’m anxious to make something really good out of it. Follow up the first great success, you know. By the way, I haven’t yet read *Loutré*. Why don’t you give me a copy?”

“Haven’t got one,” growled Aristide.

“I’ll send to Lafitte for a few copies,” suggested Mondell, but Tritou again became very angry.

“You’ll do nothing of the kind. I’ll give you the book as soon as possible. But for the present do me the one favor and forget *Loutré*. I want my new book judged on its own merits. No comparisons, if you please. If you don’t accept my conditions I’ll stop writing.”

Peace was soon restored. Mondell promised to leave *Loutré* alone, and Aristide wrote another half dozen of his fairy tales.

The illustrations by Pierre Crachée were most delightful.



Russian in coloring, bold in outline, clever in spacing, they represented quite the best work of the rising young illustrator. Mondell was well satisfied, and when finally the manuscript was all set up and the plates all done, he gave a luncheon to Aristide and Crachée, and the three drank excellent wine to the success of the new venture. At the luncheon Mondell had suddenly an idea.

"You know, Aristide," he said, "I'm going to see Kersac to-morrow and I'll ask him to write us an introduction to your new book. He brought out *Loutré* and he'll be glad to do that for you now."

Aristide had altogether too much wine to worry about anything or to argue any question.

"Let *Loutré* take care of himself," he thought sleepily, "I can't bother any more."

Mondell went the next morning to the offices of *La Revue Illustrée* but he did not see Kersac. The editor was ill. A treacherous and neglected spring cold had developed into pneumonia, and though the general public was not yet aware of it, at the office they all knew already that there was no hope of Kersac's recovery. The introduction, therefore, remained unwritten.

The new book appeared and had a pleasant enough success. The reviews were mostly friendly; the somewhat conscious artistry of the charming trifles was praised, but in one *revue* it was said, "We should have expected some sterner stuff from the author of *Loutré*"; whereas another young columnist began "All who have admired *Loutré* will be delighted with this new book written in the very same vein and with the same playful cleverness." Aristide chuckled when he read this. "To each man his own *Loutré*," he said, yet even while he laughed he felt not quite comfortable, and somehow or other he wished that he had never meddled with *Loutré*.

Mondell was even more gratified than Aristide with the success of *Fairy Tales for Worldly-Wise*, and began at once to plan another book that Aristide ought to write.

"The author of *Loutré*," he said, "must keep on working."



Aristide, who had rather looked forward to a period of laziness and contemplation, was therefore forced to new labors, labors which he more or less resented and which deepened his antagonism against Loutré, whose outrageous demands for fame kept poor Tritou at the desk while the most superb spring invited every idle soul to loafing and dreaming. More than once Aristide tried to revolt and to escape, but Mondell stood over him, keeping him at his task, appealing to him in the name of *Loutré*, and in the end Aristide always had to give in. Spring ripened into summer, summer mellowed into fall, and the new book was done. In the shop-windows of the bookstores a yellow volume was displayed which bore in red and black letters the inscription: "*Vient de paraître*" "Just issued"—"A new volume by the author of *Loutré*."

On the date of publication Mondell himself came to Aristide with the first bound copy to congratulate the author and himself. And while he climbed the stairs that were leading to Aristide's little garret, he decided that now Tritou would have to look for new quarters. The author of *Loutré* ought to live in other surroundings. And after the first greetings were over, he talked at once of his new plans.

"I'll tell you, Aristide," he began, "you'll have to move. You are not any longer a Bohemian. You have a name and a reputation to keep up. People would wonder if they saw the author of *Loutré* living in such a hole. I know a splendid place for you. Myers, the American, who has a fine studio in Cours La Reine, wants to sublet. He sails for New York. I'll get his apartment and I'll install you there. It will be just the thing for you. Here, you can't receive a dog."

Aristide was not overpleased.

"It's all right here," he declared, "I like it. The view over the roofs suits me, and I never receive anybody anyhow. So what's the use of going to all this trouble?"

But Mondell was implacable.

"You have to move," he persisted. "In fact, you have to change your whole mode of living. You have already learned to work: now you have to learn to enjoy a dignified



leisure, when leisure is possible. In short, my friend," he added smilingly, "you have to live up to *Loutré*."

And so again Aristide and his instincts were overruled and the change of the apartment took place.

The new apartment meant really a new life to Aristide. Mondell had arranged the place with touching and infinite care, filled the cupboard with the right kind of wine, the humidor with the right kind of cigarettes, and the numerous vases with charming flowers which were renewed twice a week by a dependable florist. An efficient Japanese manservant kept the place in order and looked after Aristide's needs, and every morning at ten appeared a perfect stenographer to whom Aristide had to dictate until about three, with a short interruption for lunch. But Mondell had done even more. He had looked up old connections, visited long-forgotten friends, renewed relations with the conservative wing of the literary Paris—all in the interest of Aristide, who, consequently, was much invited and hardly ever had a moment to himself. Faultlessly attired, he sipped tea in numerous drawing-rooms, attended and gave intimate readings, was asked to formal dinners, and was everywhere praised and petted as the author of *Loutré* and other very delightful books. In vain did he try to push his new work in the foreground. *Loutré* was ever the center of interest, the dominating note in the symphony of flattery; and once Aristide overheard how one young writer, who also had climbed the social ladder to success, confided to another artist:

"Yes, they sell well, these Tritou-books, but frankly they are not much good. They sell on the strength of the *Loutré* success. I have not read the book myself—science is not quite my line, you know—but I hear from all sides that there is something in it. And the public is like this: if you have done one good thing, they accept afterward even poor stuff and think it's all right."

Now and then Aristide played with the idea really to write *Loutré*, but he soon found that this was utterly impossible. *Loutré* had grown out of his hand. He had achieved



shadowy but gigantic proportions, somewhat like a djinn in a fairy tale who, once escaped out of the bottle of respectable fiction, cannot possibly be forced again into the narrow confines of a circumscribed prison. No, Aristide decided that the question was no longer what he could do with Loutré, but rather what Loutré was going to do with him. It was a queer thought, but Aristide sometimes toyed vaguely with the fancy that Loutré had taken possession of him, body and soul, and was molding him to strange and unknown purposes; that his poor, lazy, happy-go-lucky, carefree Self had become the slave of Loutré, just as Sinbad was the slave of the Old Man of the Sea, and that whatever bodily comfort he may have gained, his spiritual freedom was lost and gone.

Mondell, of course, was quite unaware that Aristide harbored any such weird and disturbing thoughts. He was frankly delighted with the success of his protégé, and if he found the rich and fêted Aristide vastly less cheerful and far more irritable than the poor poet had been, he put it down to the erratic temperament of a genius who, having got all possible things, will still demand of fate the impossible. In fact, he admitted that this touch of disenchantment and melancholy was rather becoming to Aristide and had its market value; the more somber Tritou's little tales were, the better the public seemed to enjoy them, and Aristide's readings of his own new *contes* were always visited by the very best society. Mondell sometimes thought that it was more his manner than his matter that made Aristide so successful a lecturer. He really never read; he sat—preferably at an open fireplace—in a deep chair, or leaned against some wall or column and told his little tales in a very natural, casual, matter-of-fact way which was yet strangely effective. While he was speaking a cigarette dangled between his lean brown fingers, and—if the lights were dim enough—he punctuated his pauses by the glow of his cigarette, a glow which at certain moments had a decidedly sulphurous tang and tinge. "Is he not more an actor than a poet?" wondered Mondell, and even mentioned one day something of this thought to Aristide. But Tritou glowered quite menacingly



at his friend without vouchsafing any answer, and the topic was never more mentioned.

But whatever Aristide's special quality might have been, histrionic or poetic, he certainly had a personal appeal, and even the very exclusive club, Femina, invited him to one of its famous literary teas and gave him the very best place on the program. Mondell gratified and elated, Aristide sulky and ill-tempered, drove on the appointed day to the Avenue des Champs Elysées, where the Club was housed in a distinguished little Palais. On the way Mondell commented delightedly on his friend's good fortune.

"I'll tell you, Aristide," he said, "you can be satisfied. If I think of you as you were last year—shabby, threadbare, starved, almost begging me for a position; and now, elegant, fêted, successful, the guest of Femina—it's wonderful. *Loutré* has made you."

"I guess so," granted Aristide, but he did not sound very pleased and his face did not brighten even when he stood before his very select audience and began to speak. He looked gloomily at the silken ladies and the polished gentlemen and, leaning forward in the *fauteuil* provided for him, he said to them:

"Yesterday, when the icy wind was driving frozen snow-flakes over desolate-looking streets, I stepped into a little café round the corner just to warm my hands on a steaming glass of tea. And there I found at a table Satan sitting: alone, lonely, forlorn, infinitely bored. Somehow I felt impelled to speak to him, cheer him, show him some human sympathy—he really looked devilishly miserable. So I went over to his table, offered him a cigarette, and began the usual conversation.

"'Awful weather,' I said, 'I am frozen through and through.'

"'Yes,' admitted Satan, 'it's pretty bad; but then, what can you expect. After all, it's winter.'

"'For you it must be especially disagreeable,' I ventured then. 'You are accustomed to quite other temperatures.'

"Satan looked coldly at me. 'How so?' he asked.

"I stammered, embarrassed, 'Well, so far as I know, you



have it pretty hot down in your place; the hellish fires, the burning sinners, and so on, that must . . .’

“Satan interrupted me impatiently. ‘It’s incredible,’ he exclaimed, ‘the childish superstition of you people. Even you, a literary man, cultivated, enlightened, can repeat such nonsensical nursery fables. Let me assure you that you are greatly mistaken. We enjoy the most perfect climate—a subtle blending of the freshness of spring and the mild mellowness of fall. In our gardens—they are more beautiful than your limited fancy can imagine—blossom and fruit mingle on the very same tree. Our birds have the colors of rainbows and at the same time they sing with most melodious trills. And the perfume of our flowers is simply unsurpassed. Your ideas of my abode are, therefore, vastly incorrect.’

“I blushed under his reproach, but my curiosity was piqued. I wanted to know more. So I persisted. ‘And the lost souls?’ I asked timidly, ‘the damned, what . . .’

“He did not let me continue. He lifted his hand and his face expressed his pained disapproval. ‘What words,’ he sighed, ‘what expressions, what crudity! Lost souls—damned—I am grieved to hear you speak like this. Our guests, as *we* call them, are made perfectly free of the place, and whatever we can do to provide amusement and entertainment for them is done in the most elaborate manner. Concerts, theaters, dinners, art exhibitions, *bals masqués*—all this is offered in profusion. And for those with more quiet and scholarly tastes, we have libraries of rare books and manuscripts, collections of prints and etchings, anything, in short, you can imagine. We do our best to gratify every possible wish. No expense is too great.’

“I was staring with surprise. ‘How wonderful!’ I exclaimed; ‘why that sounds more like heaven than anything else.’

“Satan seemed pleased. ‘Yes, our place is an exact replica of heaven,’ he confided. ‘Anything you can get there we have too, and even more elegant, more elaborate, more exquisite, more subtle. Our guests get everything, just as in heaven, only—’



"‘Only—’ I repeated with a vague terror clutching my heart.

"‘Only,’ said Satan sadly, ‘they can never, even not for one moment, forget that they are not in heaven.’

"‘And that,’ I asked, ‘that is—’

"‘Yes,’ answered Satan wearily, ‘that is it. To have everything heaven can grant you and yet not be in heaven—that’s hell.’

"And while I was still pondering over these awful words he disappeared from my table."

Aristide, having finished, leaned back in his *fauteuil* and lighted his cigarette. Then he had to get up to acknowledge the applause, which was generous and spontaneous for, slight as his little tale was, his manner of delivery had been very effective, and his hearers were undoubtedly impressed. Next to Monsieur Mondell sat two ladies; the one evidently a *très grande dame*, the other equally evidently her *dame de compagnie*, and the one, the great lady, said quite enthusiastically to Mondell:

"But he is charming, this young man. Very *spirituel* and at the same time delightfully good-looking. You know, I somehow thought all the time what a splendid figure he would make in a cinema play. He is your friend, I understand. Do bring him to me and present him."

Mondell bowed and went to fetch Aristide, and while he was on this errand he inquired discreetly who the great lady was that had been so pleased with Aristide. He was highly elated when he was told that he had spoken to Madame la Comtesse de Ségur, who was known to belong not only to the aristocracy of birth but also to the literary gentry; who, being a descendant of an old family of scholars and writers, assembled in her salon all those who possessed either a *hôtel* in the Faubourg Saint Germain or an abode on the slopes of Parnassus. Aristide was found and duly presented, and the Comtesse graciously asked him to come to tea on the very next Sunday. Then the author had to meet other guests, but Mondell stayed with the Comtesse and sang the praises of his friend.

"It will be a privilege for me, Madame," he said, "to send



you those of his books which I have published. But you ought to get also his most important work, *Loutré*. Something very deep and profound. More a treatise, I should say, than a novel. Dealing with modern psychology, auto-suggestion, the subliminal self, double-personality; and also with the more occult spheres of the human mind, primitive beliefs of mankind, imitative magic, and other aspects of our subconscious life. All this grouped round the central figure of Loutré, an apache and actor at the same time. I must confess, to my shame, that I haven't read the book as yet. I always promise myself to do so, just as I promise myself to read one day the whole *Froissart*, and the real *Don Quixote*, or Dante in the original—"

The Comtesse interrupted him laughingly :

"How I can feel with you, dear Monsieur Mondell. I am quite in the same boat. Why, I could write a book on books I mean to read. Books we all know, we all quote; books which form our mental background and are, somehow, our intellectual and spiritual property and which, in the end, come to think of it, we have really never read. But to return to your handsome friend. You did not read his book as yet, but—?"

"But I am assured from all sides," continued Mondell, "that it is something very fine. Quite a contribution to that part of our literature which is a combination of *belles lettres* and science. I am certain Madame will be greatly interested in it."

"Of course I shall be," said the Comtesse eagerly. "In fact, I am already now very much interested in book and author. Don't forget to buy *Loutré* for me before Sunday," she added, turning to her *dame de compagnie*. "You'll get it at Brentano's, without doubt."

And then all conversation stopped, because "by request" Aristide had to tell another little tale.

The Comtesse received Aristide on Sunday with a warm cordiality which made him feel at once very much at home.

"I have nobody else for tea but you, Monsieur Tritou," she said, "because I am an intellectual *gourmet*. Cheap wines you mix with mineral water, you soften the bitterness



of vermouth and the roughness of gin with *fleur d'oranger* and sugar and other ingredients and get a cocktail; but if a rare vintage is offered to you you want it pure, unmixed, by itself, to enjoy the exquisite flavor. So no other guests but you to-day. I had my nephew at dinner but I sent him away. I want to talk to you and of you and of your work. You did get *Loutré* for me, didn't you, Constance?"

The *dame de compagnie*, who was pouring tea, felt terror-stricken. She had forgotten all about that miserable book. But it would never do to confess. The Comtesse would be furious. So, leaving quickly her teacups, she said:

"Why, certainly, madame. I bought it yesterday, and I put it on this little table together with the new *Revue des Deux Mondes*."

Aristide looked at the indicated table with a kind of wondering awe. He would hardly have been surprised if the book had really been there. By now everything seemed possible to him. But the table was conspicuously empty.

"I can't understand it," said Mademoiselle Constance. "I saw the books myself this morning. Three volumes—aren't there three, Monsieur Tritou?—all beautifully bound. I don't know who can have taken it."

"Perhaps my nephew got hold of it," smiled the Comtesse. "He may have looked into it and, reading a few lines, found the temptation too strong, and took it with him. Quite a compliment to you, Monsieur Tritou. But we will not sorrow over the book as long as we have the author. In fact, I think, Monsieur Tritou, you should present a copy to me, perhaps even one with a nice inscription—"

"Madame," interrupted Aristide, and his voice had a ring of sincerity which pleased the Comtesse, "Madame, nothing could give me greater pleasure than to offer you this book if it were only possible. But alas, we authors are negligent people. I do not possess a single copy. And as to buying it—" he shrugged his shoulders eloquently. "Mademoiselle performed a miracle in getting it. I doubt if there is another copy in all Paris."

Constance, who was happy over the turn the affair had taken, corroborated Aristide eagerly.



"Yes, madame," she explained, "I had a very hard time getting that work. Brentano's were all out of it. At last I found it in a little bookshop in the Palais Royale. Evidently it is out of print."

"Yes," continued Aristide, "It is out of print, and if I ever regretted that fact I regret it to-day."

"Why, no," chided the Comtesse. "You should be proud that a work of this type has sold so well. You'll present to me then the first copy of the second edition."

"The second edition," sighed Aristide. "I wish I could see it already. But you know, madame, how publishers are. And then, again, you cannot blame them. Bookmaking is a costly luxury nowadays. Now there is my friend Mondell—"

"Ah, yes, Monsieur Mondell," remembered the Comtesse. "He was good enough to send me your other books, and I am truly grateful to him. I enjoyed immensely your *Fairy Tales for Worldly-Wise*. Do read me 'Blue Roses' once more. I think that's my favorite."

The Comtesse, who was not far from fifty, had no illusions about herself. She knew that she was no longer young, and she said sometimes with a wry smile:

"I am the most dismal creature in the world. I am a charming woman who does not charm any more."

But though she had lost the form and features of Youth, all the eagerness, the enthusiasm, the quick perceptions of a young heart and mind were still hers; and however disagreeable she could be as an enemy, just so delightful and helpful she was as a friend. And to Aristide she became at once a very loyal and devoted friend. She liked him unreservedly though she chided him incessantly.

"You see," she explained to him, "there are people who are excellent in every detail. I approve of every trait in them; they have the right opinions, they do the right things, they even have the right manners. Yet, on the whole and taking it all in all, I have no use for them. And then again there are others who constantly irritate me; who in every detail of their personality annoy me and make me angry;



who never do what I expect them to do, never say what I wish to hear, never even behave as I think it right to behave. And yet, on the whole and taking it all in all, they are the people I care for, the people I want, the ones I am truly fond of. You, Aristide, belong to this class. You annoy me extremely, yet I like you nevertheless. And because I like you I tell you frankly you waste your time. You are more than a writer: you are a scholar, a scientist. You know the hidden recesses of the human mind, the dim past of the human race. Instead of cynical playful little things—be they as charming as they may—you ought to write for us works of abiding value. Monumental things. But you are abominably lazy.”

Aristide looked up from his teacup with which he was playing and asked with a queer smile:

“Whoever told you, *chère amie*, that I am a scholar and a scientist? Perhaps you are mistaken in this assumption.”

“Nonsense,” exclaimed the Comtesse sharply. “The author of *Loutré* is a scholar and a scientist. Don’t pretend to me. Only, as I say and the more’s the pity, you are a negligent creature. But I am going to take care of you; I am going to find for you the right place and the proper career.”

Aristide lifted his hands in mock terror.

“Have pity,” he groaned, “let me off easy. Whatever you do, don’t make me a professor. I’d balk at that.”

“But why?” persisted the Comtesse. “You’d make an excellent professor. You look so delightfully pictorial. We could send you as an exchange professor to America and you’d marry an heiress. Wouldn’t you like that?”

“No,” said Aristide decidedly, “not at all. But then, I am never permitted to do what I like. I lead a life that is utterly distasteful to me. Well, what’s the difference?”

“None at all,” the Comtesse assured him. “If you were leading the life you dream of, you would abhor it equally. Things look pleasant only from afar. The charm of distance lends them grace and color and beauty. But when we come near we find the same sordidness, the same dullness, the same gray and intolerable boredom. Let me tell you a little



thing that happened to me the other day. It sounds just like one of your tales. You could have written it. I was shopping and I went through one of the side streets. I think it was the Rue Taitbout. And there in a shop window I saw the most delicious string of beads. The color was a mystical deep green, the carving fantastic and weird yet full of harmony, the whole thing breathing the charm, the fragrance, the elusiveness of the Orient. I felt I had to get that string of beads; they were at that moment the one supreme desire of my soul. Entering the shop, I found quite an old man at the counter, and I explained to him what I wanted. Well, he took a shabby box from one of the shelves, and in it there were string on string of beads. But they all looked miserably cheap and vulgar and commonplace. 'No,' I said, 'I don't want these. My chamber-maid wouldn't wear them. They are horrid. I want the one you have in your shop window.' He assured me most earnestly that he was showing me the very same beads as those I had admired, but I could not believe him. At last he opened the glass-case and handed me the string I had seen. And he was right, my friend. Holding my treasure in my hand, I perceived how cheap and miserable and undesirable it was. 'How is that possible?' I asked him embarrassed. 'They looked so very different to me.' He shrugged his shoulders. 'Perhaps the glass did it,' he suggested, and I saw in a flash that he was right. It is the glass, the glass of illusion, that makes the things in the shop window of life appear so utterly desirable. But if, God forbid, we ever get what we desire, if our wishes are ever fulfilled, then we see how valueless, how poor, how mean all these treasures are, and we are more bitterly disappointed than those who have wished in vain. So you see, my friend, that I am justified in not consulting your wishes at all. I am going to do what is good for you, and not what you like, for, come to think of it, there is nothing to like in this disenchanted world of ours."

The Comtesse was as good as her word. Without consulting Aristide in the least, she looked round to find something really worth while for him, a position adequate to his



great gifts, in which she believed implicitly. And the gods were evidently with her. At a Lenten gathering she met Monsieur Du Fayel, a rich industrialist who, having retired, had become interested in the more abstruse realms of psychology and literature, and whose ambition it was to create in Nancy, his birthplace, a very dignified monthly magazine, which should bear the name *Revue Du Fayel*. He confided his plans to the Comtesse, who listened to him with delighted interest, and when he added:

"You know, madame, I want it to be something very exquisite. Very literary and yet truly scientific. A cross, so to say, between the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Hibbert Journal*."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" she exclaimed enthusiastically, "and by sheer good luck I have just the man who will edit to perfection this particular magazine."

"Really?" said Monsieur Du Fayel, interested, "and who is he?"

"His name," answered the Comtesse, "is Aristide Tritou. He writes, as a hobby, very charming and clever little sketches, and fairy tales and playlets of quite impeccable style. But his real achievement is *Loutré*, a work of three large volumes. I should call it the French equivalent of Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Of course it's out of print. All good things are. To-day I wanted to buy the *Journal des Goncourts*. Impossible. I couldn't get a copy for love nor money. So it is with *Loutré*. You can't buy it, but Mondell, the publisher—you know him, don't you? He is a most conservative man, and so careful in his statements—well, Mondell told me it is a masterwork. Grouped around the figure of Loutré, an actor and apache, are all the occult beliefs of primitive mankind: imitative magic, tree-worship, priesthood of kings—or is it kingdom of priests? I am never quite certain—and so on and so forth. And then, developed out of this foundation, the modern psychology in all its intricacies: the subconscious self, metempsychosis, auto-suggestion, Coué, of course—Coué is a Nancy man, so that must interest you especially—faith healing, and what not. If you can get Monsieur Tritou to be your editor you



will have a find. If you want me to, I can arrange a meeting with him for you."

Monsieur Du Fayel was very well pleased with this idea.

"I shall be truly grateful to you, Comtesse," he said. "If this Monsieur Tritou and I take to each other and he is willing to come to Nancy, the thing can be settled very soon."

The meeting was arranged, the two men liked each other, and the editorship of the *Revue Du Fayel* was offered to Aristide. He was loth to accept and made many excuses.

"My dear man," he said to Du Fayel, "you are foolhardy. You offer me a splendid salary, a responsible position—I understand you want to give me an entire free hand—and yet you do not know the least thing about me. I might be a fraud, or worse. Better look out."

But Du Fayel merely laughed.

"The Comtesse de Ségur vouches for you, and in speaking to you I formed my own impressions. That's enough. I wish you would take the job. Nancy, of course, is not Paris, but you'll be compensated by the standing you will have in the community. So better think it over and let me know in a day or two."

To the Comtesse, Aristide was even more outspoken in his refusal.

"I can't," he said. "There are a thousand reasons why I can't, but above all, I don't want to leave Paris. Paris is my love, my delight, the joy of my heart. I adore the air here, the crowds in the street, the *quais* and the boulevards, the parks and the Bois. Come to think of it, I adore you too, *chère amie*. So why shall I give all this up and bury myself in Nancy?"

"To be worthy of *Loutré*," said the Comtesse. "Anyhow, don't let's discuss it. You are going to accept. I have decided that and I know what is good for you. This position is a godsend, Aristide. It will absolutely make you. One day you'll be grateful to me. So don't let me hear any more of your nonsense."

But most vehement was Aristide to Mondell.

"Damn it," he shouted at him, "I am not going to be



bullied by you and a meddlesome old woman. Nancy, of all places in God's world! Nancy, and to be an editor there! I always hated editors. Insufferable lot, all of them. And in addition to all that, editor of such a magazine! What do I know about the subject?"

Mondell laughed heartily.

"That's good," he said, "you, the author of *Loutré*, you ask what you know about the subject. Well, my dear boy, what you don't know about it isn't worth knowing, and old Du Fayel can't find anyone better for the place. So don't rave any more. Be sensible and thank your stars."

In the end Aristide had to give in. A tentative agreement was arrived at; Monsieur Du Fayel instructed his lawyers to draw up the formal contracts, and the Comtesse arranged that the actual signing of these contracts, which would be ready in about a week's time, should take place in her salon. She intended to have a select gathering for this occasion, and to play for once Mæcenas in real style. Aristide—whom the Comtesse treated quite as a fractious child whom she had made behave—Aristide did not protest at anything any more, but he looked gloomy enough when he left the hôtel of the Comtesse, and when Mondell offered to walk home with him he refused curtly. No, not even a good quarrel with Mondell would cheer him. He wandered alone and moodily through the streets, his coat open to the first breezes of spring, the refrain of an old couplet of Désaugiers persistently haunting him, so that he repeated over and over again:

*"Adieu bonheur,  
Ma fortune est faite."*

Suddenly Aristide perceived that he had wandered into the neighborhood of the Trois Couronnes.

"God," he exclaimed, "now I know what I want. I want to get drunk. The Trois Couronnes, that's the place for me."

Entering the restaurant, he found it almost empty—the hour was ridiculously early—but there in one corner was some one sitting. Aristide went over and saw with pleasure that the lonely guest, half asleep over his *petit noir*, was



Charles Morissey. He slapped him on the shoulder and said laughingly:

"Charley, Charley old boy, wake up! We both must get drunk to-day."

Charles looked up.

"Aristide," he asked in astonishment. "What brings you here? You, who, since you're famous, have forgotten us, neglected us, cut us dead—what do you want here?"

Aristide sank into a chair.

"Don't preach, Charley," he said. "You're an ass. You know nothing. I can't cut anybody because I am not I any more. I don't belong to myself. Anyhow, what's the difference? Just shut up and drink with me. Is there any champagne in this place? Let's have it. All of it. Twice as much. Get that waiter over there and let him make it snappy."

Charles could not resist such an invitation. The champagne was brought and after the first few glasses all differences, all hurts, all slights were forgotten. Charles and Aristide were the pals of old, and laughed and talked as in former times. The waiter came over with the *carte du jour*, but Aristide waved him away. He did not want to eat, he wanted to drink.

"More champagne," he ordered, and when the bottles were brought he said to Charles:

"Listen, Charley, let's mix it. With absinthe. Tastes fine. Has the right kick in it. Tell that waiter to bring it. Let him shake a leg. He's as slow as a snail."

The absinthe came and the friends toasted each other. Charles wanted to talk shop, to inquire about Aristide's work, but Aristide bade him to keep quiet.

"No literature," he declared. "I want to have a good time. We'll make a night of it. Go over and play something on that darned old piano. Let's sing something."

Arm in arm they went over to the piano and soon their voices mingled in their favorite song:

"In the castle of Gradescio  
By the town of Temesvar



Sat the valiant Prince Bibesco,  
 Servia's great old Hospodar.

Say, what did the Prince Bibesco,  
 Servia's great old Hospodar  
 In the castle of Gradesco  
 By the town of Temesvar?

Slivovitz drank Prince Bibesco  
 In the castle of Gradesco  
 By the town of Temesvar  
 Till he could not see a star."

"Slivovitz," repeated Aristide, "why shouldn't we have Slivovitz too. Great idea. Tell that waiter to bring Slivovitz."

The order was given, but the waiter came back with regrets.

"We have no Slivovitz, monsieur," he reported. "We have Benedictine, Chartreuse, Dubonnet, Crème de Menthe—"

"All right, all right," interrupted Aristide, "bring it, bring it."

"What, monsieur?" inquired the waiter.

"Everything," decided Aristide.

The waiter shrugged his shoulders. Monsieur was evidently not quite right in his head. But he returned with Benedictine and Chartreuse. Yet at the same time he presented the bill. Aristide paid but he was angry.

"What a place," he groaned, "what a miserable place. I am annoyed. I am excessively annoyed. Let's go out of here, Charley, and go to some decent café. I want a glass of beer. I am very thirsty. A glass of beer will be the best thing for us."

The café was found, the glass of beer was drunk and followed by more and more glasses of beer, and in the end Charles suggested that he had better return home. Berthe would wonder where he stayed so long. But Aristide did not want to hear of it.



"Let Berthe wonder if she wants to," he said. "You come with me. You have never seen my place. I want you to come now. I'll take a *fiacre*. I am not drunk but I am tired. Can't walk well. We'll be there in no time."

Charles was easily persuaded. Berthe would be angry anyway, so he might as well hang for an ox as for a sheep. And he wanted to see Aristide's place. So the *fiacre* was called and the friends were driving through the mild night toward Cours La Reine. On the way Aristide wondered that he was not drunk at all. His legs were heavy, his words did not come quite easily, but his mind was entirely clear. In fact, clearer than ever. He saw all things with a strange lucidity; he understood himself and fate and life ever so much better than ever before. To be sure, he could not talk well, and walking was a nuisance, but the riddle of the universe held no more mysteries for him. He was insight and wisdom personified. He knew all things and, knowing them, he disliked them.

They arrived at the studio, dismissed their *fiacre*, mounted the stairs, and entered the apartment. Charles was deeply impressed.

"Wheew, Aristide," he whistled, "what a place! What a place! You do yourself well."

Aristide had switched on the lights, filled two glasses with liqueur, taken out the cigarettes, and, having thus fulfilled all duties of hospitality, found a big chair in which he settled himself.

"Yes, I guess it's all right," he said, "only I liked my old place better. That view over the roofs of the big city, that was great. And my old desk just at the window, and from my couch I could see the young moon and the morning star. Here—well, here all is soft and pillowy and artistic. Hate it like hell."

Charles was surprised.

"If you don't like it, Aristide, why do you keep this place?"

Aristide shrugged his shoulders.

"Why? Search me. I don't know. Ask Loutré. Take these cigarettes for instance. Dimitrinos. Don't like them



either. They're bitter. Petit Caporal taste ever so much nicer. But Dimitrinos are expensive, they are in style. So I have to have them. Loutré, you know. He makes me do all these things. Damn Loutré!"

Charles took it all as a joke.

"Well," he said laughingly, "you ought not to damn him, even though your tastes disagree. He really made you. Thanks to Loutré, you're famous."

"Yes," admitted Aristide, "it's true. I'm famous and he made me. Funny. Could make a comedy out of it. All the work I did, all the books I wrote did not bring me as much fame as the one thing I never wrote at all."

Charles sat up. The fumes of alcohol were somewhat clearing from his brain and he was staring his surprise.

"What!" he exclaimed, "you did not write *Loutré*?"

"No," Aristide assured him, "not a line of it."

"But then—then—who wrote that book?" demanded Charles excitedly.

Aristide again shrugged his shoulders.

"S'far as I know," he said, "nobody ever did."

Charles was dumbfounded.

"Then the whole *Loutré* thing is a fake?"

Aristide grimaced.

"Why fake?" he said, "ugly word, fake. Hate it. No, not fake exactly. Different. Legend perhaps. Yes, that's it. Legend. Loutré's a legend, coming out of some dim beginnings and growing, and growing, and growing."

He sat for a while silently and smoked, and Charles, who did not quite understand and who was too drunk to care greatly, dozed in his chair. Suddenly Aristide looked up and said:

"Tell me, Charley, who told you first of *Loutré*?"

Charles tried to remember.

"Who told me first of *Loutré*?" he repeated. "Let me see. Why, Berthe did. Ever so long ago. She came home one evening, I think it was in November a year ago. Had met F. F. on the street and was raving mad. He had told her about *Loutré* and his illustrations and the *Revue Illustrée*



and Lafitte and so on. And she could not forgive me your success."

Aristide thought deeply.

"Well, of course," he decided at last, "I can't make it out in all the details. But it's likely that Kersac told something to Felix—I remember I met Felix when I came from Kersac—and Felix told a little more to Berthe, and Berthe a little more to you, and so on and so on. In this way Loutré was growing. Legend—just as I said."

"But," persisted Charles, "what could Kersac have told to Felix?"

"Loutré, of course," Aristide said impatiently.

"*Loutré?*" asked Charles bewildered. "But you said you did not do *Loutré*."

"Nonsense," growled Aristide, "I said I did not write that damned stuff. For mercy's sake, Charles, don't be such an ass. Try to understand. I was dead broke at that time. I had not a sou. Went to Kersac to get some money. If I had asked him outright he would have kicked me out. So I told him Loutré. He gave me a hundred francs for it. He was the first one to believe in Loutré, to be impressed by him. That was the beginning."

Again he fell into his musing silence, and Charles, who did not know what to make out of all these confessions, did not disturb him; in fact, he almost fell asleep. But just when his eyes became really heavy, Aristide startled him with the question:

"Tell me, Charley, are you superstitious?"

Charles considered the proposition.

"Oh, I don't think so," he yawned. "I pride myself . . ."

"Pride yourself nothing," interrupted Aristide. "Don't talk rot. Of course you're superstitious. We all are. We live by our superstitions and die of them. Fear, sin, conscience—in the end nothing but the superstition of Taboo. Family, country, patriotism—superstition of the Totem. Superstition wherever you look. Racial superstitions ingrained into us from prenatal days and personal superstitions acquired or perhaps remembered from some weird nursery tale or the shadowy corner of an unfamiliar room.



You've got it as well as all of us. Counting cobblestones. Looking for odd and even numbers. Touching wood, and what not."

Again he fell silent, but after a while he spoke out of the depth of his chair:

"You know, Charley, I always had, from the days of my childhood, a very personal superstition. Funny kind at that. —Remember how kids sometimes draw faces—a round circle, two eyes, a nose, a mouth?—well, I always had a kind of shudder when I looked at these things. Gave me the creeps. Rubbed them out whenever I could. For somehow I had the dim feeling that in creating a form you created at the same time—"

"A soul?" asked Charles.

"Not exactly a soul, but a spiritual power, or perhaps only an influence; at any rate, something that was there, that could work, could hurt perhaps, could do things. Sounds queer, I know, but I felt that way. Think the old Jews felt like it when they forbade making pictures and statues. They knew something of occult things, got the knowledge from ancient Egypt, and they were afraid—afraid of the spiritual equivalent of the material form. Knew it was dangerous to meddle with such things. And everywhere through the whole history of mankind you will find hints that point in this direction. Interrelation between matter and spirit. One, in fact, expresses the other. If matter becomes articulate it is spirit; if spirit becomes visible it is form. Create then a form and you create power. Well, in a way, that's just what I did with *Loutré*."

He tossed his cigarette away, lit a new one and wandered through the room.

"In the end," he said, "the thing resolves itself to this: Who is the creature and who the creator? Did I make *Loutré* or did *Loutré* make me? I guess, more or less, he made me, is making me constantly. Changing me! I am not I any more. I'm the author of *Loutré*. I have to lead a life that's pleasing to *Loutré*; I write for the greater fame of *Loutré*, and now I'll have to renounce Paris, and joy, and



the carefree pleasures of youth, just to go to Nancy and edit a magazine for the greater glory of Loutré."

He paused again, stood at the window and looked out. Then, turning round, he said:

"Listen, Charley, sometimes I think that primitive man played once with the idea of an Invisible Being, of God, just as I played with the idea of Loutré. And then this spiritual power thus created grew and grew and became stronger and stronger and made man, who is but little more than an ape, do strange, unheard-of, unpredictable things: things glorious, heroic, and ridiculous; things which are really not in the nature nor in the power of man to do and which he yet accomplishes for the greater glory of a god he created."

Charles Morissey held his head.

"Oh, Aristide," he groaned, "I wish you would not say such things. They sound bad, unholy, blasphemous. What does it help you to have thoughts like these?"

"In a way it does," insisted Aristide, "takes me out of the loneliness of my personal experience and connects me with the fate of the race; makes the little storm in my life part of the 'vast driftings of the cosmic weather.' After all, that's what Time is really there for. To connect us with Eternity. Time's a wayside station. Dull, uninteresting, dirty, noisy, disappointing. But now and then, if you happen to strike the propitious hour, you can make there a connection with Eternity."

Again a deep silence fell. Aristide had regained his chair; he leaned back and looked long and dreamily at the ceiling. "If I had only written down *Loutré*," he began again, "nothing would have happened. Things put into words are harmless, innocuous. The original idea, the inspiration, is full of passion, fire, urge, power. But when you put it into words, write it down on paper, it gets chilled, weakened, emasculated. Loutré put into the confines of a story, into the prison of a printed page, couldn't have done anything. But I was too lazy. Had all the money to spend. So I let it go. And he was there, with the original push and urge undiminished



in him, starting out on his own hook. And going on, and on, and on."

Charles jumped up.

"Why, that's insane, Aristide," he cried; "what can he do? He does not live."

Aristide showed his impatience.

"Don't be an ass, Charles. He lives as well as you do. Perhaps in a different way, but quite as alive. And he does exactly what you do. If you want some one to lend you money, or to bring you this or that, or to do you a favor—you don't use physical force, do you? You impress the mind of this person—you make him believe in you. Well, that's just what Loutré does. Impresses the mind. People believe in him, do things for him and on account of him. Everything in which one believes is alive. Dead gods are gods in which no one believes any more."

"People believe in the devil," said Charles quite irrelevantly.

"Well, perhaps Loutré is a devil," agreed Aristide. "Not Lucifer in person, but one of the minor devils, with a terrible lust for power and a great appetite for all good things in life—comfort, riches, society, position. And because he likes them, I've got to get them. Yes, that explains Loutré very well. A minor devil."

"Malignant?" asked Charles.

Aristide considered that.

"Malignant? No. Not exactly. Not if he is not thwarted in his purposes. But when something stands in his way, then, I think—ruthless. Yes, ruthless, that's the word. Does not care what he does. Did for poor Kersac."

Charles almost screamed his denial.

"Insane," he shouted, "insane. Kersac died of pneumonia. He had influenza, then a complication set in and he had no strength left to throw off the virus. Perfectly natural."

"Yes," said Aristide, "but why should he have no strength left? Why should complications set in? Other people get well. I tell you Loutré did it. Mondell wanted to talk to Kersac about him. I should have prevented him, but I was



tired. And Mondell is such a mule. You have to argue, and argue, and argue before he gives in. So I thought: Let Loutré take care of himself. Well, he did—in his way. Could not afford, of course, to have it known that he is only the fiction of a fiction—the shadow of a shade. Wonder if he'll ever let F. F. return from Japan?"

Charles's head was whirling. All the drinks, and on top of it these revelations, it was too much.

"Aristide," he begged, "tell me that you were just fooling me; that you made simply a rotten joke. A joke I almost believed in. But if you did not jest, if it's true, if you're really in the power of that Thing, that Loutré, why don't you cast him off, denounce him, deny him and get free?"

Aristide shook his head.

"Too late," he said. "If I had spoken at once, then it could have been a hoax; but now—now it's too much of a mess. Then consider, Charley: all I have, all I possess is really Loutré's. Denouncing him means to give it all up. That's not easy. The fleshpots of Egypt, you know. I'm enslaved.

"Of course I have still some spiritual reservations left. I have never really confessed to—I would almost say professed—Loutré. I just let him have his way. Never said directly anything that would strengthen his position. But I know myself that it's only a subterfuge. Matter of time. Sooner or later—he'll drive me more and more into a corner—then the last shred of the old Aristide will be gone."

Charles Morissey almost cried with vexation.

"You make me sick, Aristide," he protested, "saying such awful things. Impious, utterly impious. . . . But of course it's all nonsense. There are no—what did you call them?—spiritual influences. Minor devils. We live in the twentieth century. Who'll believe such things nowadays?"

"All right, all right," answered Aristide. "I'll put it for you in twentieth-century language, if you insist. Then Loutré is not a devil outside of me but in me. Split personality, you know. You remember the case of Miss Beauchamp and Sally B? There is Loutré and I. Part of the same Ego, yet antagonistic to each other, each with a different



set of preferences, views, demands upon life, and so on. And he, the Invader, becomes ever stronger and stronger. Crowds me out, in fact. Has things his own way more and more. Why, he invades me even physically. Changes my appearance. People used to say that I looked typically the poet. Now everybody thinks I am or ought to be an actor. Loutré, you see. Playing the master in the house. And soon he'll have me crushed down altogether, and the *I* you knew, the *I* that still tries to persist will be submerged—gone forever. Well, what's the difference? Things are as they are."

Another silence fell. This time it was Charles who broke it.

"Listen, Aristide," he began solemnly, "what you told me this night is sacred to me. I shall never tell anyone a word about it—"

Aristide interrupted him with a mocking laughter.

"Of course not, Charley," he said. "I know you'll keep your mouth shut. Anyhow, you'd better. Loutré might not like it if you told on him, and if I were you I should not care to meddle with him, whatever he may be. Swift vengeance, you know. Well, what did you want to say?"

"I wanted to say," continued Charles disconcertedly, "that I implore you to tell the whole truth, to make a public confession. That I pray you to purge your soul, to get rid of the sinister power which got hold of you. That I abjure you to do penance before it is too late."

"Well, I'll see, I'll see," yawned Aristide. "Anyhow it's too late to discuss anything any more. I'll give you a shake-down on my couch. You can't go home now. Berthe will never let you in. Let's go to sleep, old boy, and I hope that Loutré will not haunt you in your dreams."

When Aristide awoke the next day and found Charles Morissey still sleeping on his couch, he wondered what had possessed him to spend such a night with an old friend whom he had decidedly outgrown. He must really have been drunk—much more drunk than he had imagined himself to be, or he would not have told Charley all he did tell. Not that he was afraid Charles would gossip—he knew him too well for that—but it was disagreeable to face him after all the



revelations of the night before. Charles would surely not have sense enough to disregard their talk or to treat it as something entirely unrelated to the usual run of things—there were hardly any people in the world who had this spiritual tact. Most of them, all of them in fact, pinned you down to the consequences of a passing mood and, having been intimate with them for one moment, you were committed to be intimate with them for the rest of your life.

What a miserable proposition! Aristide shuddered at the idea of continuing any personal talk. Therefore he dressed quietly, told his Japanese man to make coffee for his guest as soon as he should awake, and went out leaving a note for Charles, excusing himself with an appointment and promising to see him soon again. Well, he would take good care that soon should not be so very soon. He only hoped that Charles would be gone before he returned. On second thought he added a postscript to his note, saying, "Don't wait for me. Might be late."

Charles did not wait. He left, but before he left he penned a line to Aristide which read, "Good-by. I implore you to follow my advice."

Aristide, coming home and seeing this message, was annoyed. What a presuming ass, this Charles! Follow my advice! As if anybody could possibly advise anybody else! In the depths of our being always strangers, misunderstanding one another on all points, and yet offering advice—preposterous! Only human beings could be quite so fatuous and silly. No lion in God's world advises another lion as to his duties in the animal kingdom; no tiger advises another tiger to curb his appetite and let not the lust of blood run away with him. Beasts were satisfied to follow the law of their nature and to rest there. Beasts had dignity. But man, in his sick and swollen vanity, goes and advises. Aristide considered writing an article on this. The first sentence formed itself in his head: "If you want to follow my advice, don't follow anybody's advice." He winced. Awful. Journalese. Cheap. Why, for heaven's sake, was he always tempted to write cheap things, make cheap jokes? Once upon a time he had had other dreams. Well, better



not think about once-upon-a-time. He went to bed and slept the dead sleep of utter oblivion.

In the next few days Aristide pondered over his problem and could not find any way out. He was sick of everything, he wanted to tell and to get out of all complications; yet at the same time some part in him—the Loutré-part he thought, remembering his talk with Charles—some part of him decided that it was impossible to speak, that he had to go on and let things shape themselves as they would. And, indeed, it was difficult. What could he tell? The truth? But what exactly was the truth? And to whom could he tell it? Mondell? Reminding him of the day when he had come to the office and stating the facts as they had developed? Impossible. Mondell would never understand. He would see a common fraud in something which was really quite different, something ever so much more complicated. Mondell was a splendid fellow but he lacked imagination. He would never understand the intangible influences that had dominated Aristide. The Comtesse would have more the instinct for these doubtful and difficult things, yet to speak to her was also an appalling task. To explain to somebody else what one could only in an hour of drunkenness, of vanished inhibitions, explain somehow to oneself was almost impossible.

What he would have to say in bold words would amount to this: I have fooled you all. There is no Loutré. Yet again, was there really no Loutré? Granted that Loutré was merely an idea—well, but it was his idea, his creation. That he had not made a book out of this idea was a mere accident. Why make so much fuss about that accident? The whole thing was rotten. Awful mess. He wished it had never happened. Yet what could he do now? There was really nothing to do. Confess? Repent? He sneered in his thoughts at Morissey's moral attitude. What a fool Charles was; what a bigger fool he himself for having told Charles! It was bad enough to be bothered by one's own conscience, but to be bothered in addition by the conscience of somebody else was worse. And above all, Charles's. How he had outgrown him and the whole crowd of the Trois Couronnes! He could never return to them and lead



the old life any more. Just as little as Loutré could return to his former life. Funny—he had not written *Loutré* but he had lived him. Was Loutré himself? Perhaps one could start a “confession” from this point. Make it the beginning of some kind of explanation. Though, God knows, it would be a tough proposition. Damnably hard. Well, hard or not, he would have to tell Mondell. No, he would rather tell the Comtesse. To-morrow. Go up quite casually and just tell it as one tells an anecdote. A good joke. A bad joke, rather. Yes, to-morrow. That was decided. Nothing more to think about it.

But, began a small and insinuating voice in him, was it really quite fair to his friends, who had shown him nothing but the most unselfish kindness, to trouble them, hurt them, worry them? If that Loutré affair was a burden, why not carry that burden silently and alone? He hated to go to Nancy. He hated to be an editor. He wanted to live in Paris—gay, carefree, irresponsible, writing little fantastic things and amusing himself in his own solitary way. Well, then he would atone for whatever he had failed by foregoing his preferences and leading the life that was expected of him. When he came so far in his reasoning he got furious. “That’s Loutré,” he shouted to himself. “Tries to get round me this way. I’ll fool him yet. I’m going to tell.”

But the days passed and he did not tell. In fact, he kept away from Mondell as well as from the Comtesse till the time arrived when the contract with Monsieur Du Fayel had to be signed. “I’ll tell them then and there,” decided Aristide while he dressed to go to the Comtesse. “When they are all assembled, I’ll tell them. Plain out.”

But he felt very miserable and somehow he did not believe in himself any more. He found more guests than he had expected at the Comtesse’s house. Academicians, writers, artists, men of finance and business, and he felt it was impossible for him to make a scene in these surroundings and under these circumstances. Moodily he stood round, answering absent-mindedly flattering remarks addressed to him, wondering what to do, wondering if there was still anything he could do. And suddenly the spirit of the old



Aristide awakened in him, the old Aristide who had always found a way out, who had been equal to every emergency of the moment; a gay scoundrel, happy, carefree, and resourceful; infinitely more human than the new, rich, famous Aristide who had everything heaven could grant and yet was not in heaven. And this old Aristide whispered to him, "Why not clear out? Just simply go away without any explanation, without any confession, without any fuss, leaving Loutré and the others to deal with this disappearance as well as they could?" Aristide flushed with pleasure at the idea. God, why had he not sooner thought of this? Why not sooner found this escape? A word came into his mind—Touraine—and he had in a flash the vision of a clear blue sky, the fresh winds of heaven, green young things scenting the air with the breath of spring, the murmurs of running water, and he himself wandering, free and unfettered once more, wherever his fancy led him. Clear out—that was the thing! There lay his salvation. He moved toward the door of the salon, gained the next room, and was reaching the hall when he was confronted by the Comtesse who, following a strange impulse, just as if somebody had warned her of some danger, had left everything and everybody and had hurried after him.

"Aristide," she said anxiously, "what are you doing here? You cannot absent yourself. The contract is going to be signed right now. Don't play the fool. Come back with me. I want to introduce you to a score of people."

Aristide stood still. The light went out of his face. Well, he was trapped, he couldn't do anything. Sullenly he turned round and followed the Comtesse, and while he did so he muttered to an unseen presence:

"All right, all right. I give in. You win, I lose. Game's over."

He bowed right and left in a somewhat mechanical fashion, and went at last obediently to the table at which the lawyers and Monsieur Du Fayel were already seated, and to which the Comtesse was proudly guiding her protégé. When Aristide held the fountain pen in his hand he realized fully that he had been beaten. There was nothing more to do.



His invisible adversary had triumphed. He had to surrender, and his surrender was complete, final, irrevocable. With a kind of desperate flourish he signed his contract: Aristide Tritou, Author of *Loutré*.



## X

### The Most Dangerous Game

By RICHARD CONNELL

*Nominated by LOREN PALMER, Collier's*

"Off there to the right—somewhere—is a large island," said Whitney. "It's rather a mystery——"

"What island is it?" Rainsford asked.

"The old charts call it 'Ship-Trap Island,'" Whitney replied. "A suggestive name, isn't it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don't know why. Some superstition——"

"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

"You've good eyes," said Whitney, with a laugh, "and I've seen you pick off a moose moving in the brown fall brush at four hundred yards, but even you can't see four miles or so through a moonless Caribbean night."

"Nor four yards," admitted Rainsford. "Ugh! It's like moist velvet."

"It will be light enough in Rio," promised Whitney. "We should make it in a few days. I hope the jaguar guns have come from Purdey's. We should have some good hunting up the Amazon. Great sport, hunting."

"The best sport in the world," agreed Rainsford.

"For the hunter," amended Whitney. "Not for the jaguar."

"Don't talk rot, Whitney," said Rainsford. "You're a big-game hunter, not a philosopher. Who cares how a jaguar feels?"

"Perhaps the jaguar does," observed Whitney.



"Bah! They've no understanding."

"Even so, I rather think they understand one thing at least—fear. The fear of pain and the fear of death."

"Nonsense," laughed Rainsford. "This hot weather is making you soft, Whitney. Be a realist. The world is made up of two classes. The hunters and the hunted. Luckily, you and I are hunters. Do you think we've passed that island yet?"

"I can't tell in the dark. I hope so."

"Why?" asked Rainsford.

"The place has a reputation—a bad one."

"Cannibals?" suggested Rainsford.

"Hardly. Even cannibals wouldn't live in such a God-forsaken place. But it's got into sailor lore, somehow. Didn't you notice that the crew's nerves seem a bit jumpy to-day?"

"They were a bit strange, now you mention it. Even Captain Nielsen——"

"Yes, even that tough-minded old Swede, who'd go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light. Those fishy blue eyes held a look I never saw there before. All I could get out of him was: 'This place has an evil name among seafaring men, sir.' Then he said to me, very gravely: 'Don't you feel anything?'—as if the air about us was actually poisonous. Now, you mustn't laugh when I tell you this—I did feel something like a sudden chill.

"There was no breeze. The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window. We were drawing near the island then. What I felt was a—a mental chill—a sort of sudden dread."

"Pure imagination," said Rainsford. "One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship's company with his fear."

"Maybe. But sometimes I think sailors have an extra sense that tells them when they are in danger. Sometimes I think evil is a tangible thing—with wave lengths, just as sound and light have. An evil place can, so to speak, broadcast vibrations of evil. Anyhow, I'm glad we're getting out of this zone. Well, I think I'll turn in now, Rainsford."

"I'm not sleepy," said Rainsford. "I'm going to smoke another pipe up on the after deck."



"Good night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast."

"Right. Good night, Whitney."

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there, but the muffled throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently puffed on his favorite brier. The sensuous drowsiness of the night was on him. "It's so dark," he thought, "that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids——"

An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, some one had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea closed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain cool-headedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by some one aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender, and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes, and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly he swam in that direction, swimming



with slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes desperately; he could do possibly a hundred more and then—

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the darkness, a high, screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.

He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh vitality he swam toward the sound. He heard it again; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato.

"Pistol shot," muttered Rainsford, swimming on.

Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears—the most welcome he had ever heard—the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness; he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigor; a sharp hunger was picking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

"Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food," he thought. But what kind of men? he wondered, in so forbidding a place? An unbroken front of snarled and jagged jungle fringed the shore.

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore, and



Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he had landed, he stopped.

Some wounded thing, by the evidence a large animal, had thrashed about in the underbrush; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was lacerated; one patch of weeds was stained crimson. A small, glittering object not far away caught Rainsford's eye and he picked it up. It was an empty cartridge.

"A twenty-two," he remarked. "That's odd. It must have been a fairly large animal, too. The hunter had his nerve to tackle it with a light gun. It's clear that the brute put up a fight. I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed his quarry and wounded it. The last shot was when he trailed it here and finished it."

He examined the ground closely and found what he had hoped to find—the print of hunting boots. They pointed along the cliff in the direction he had been going. Eagerly he hurried along, now slipping on a rotten log or a loose stone, but making headway; night was beginning to settle down on the island.

Bleak darkness was blacking out the sea and jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights. He came upon them as he turned a crook in the coast line, and his first thought was that he had come upon a village, for there were many lights. But as he forged along he saw to his great astonishment that all the lights were in one enormous building—a lofty structure with pointed towers plunging upward into the gloom. His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial château; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.

"Mirage," thought Rainsford. But it was no mirage, he found, when he opened the tall spiked iron gate. The stone steps were real enough; the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker was real enough; yet about it all hung an air of unreality.

He lifted the knocker, and it creaked up stiffly, as if it had never before been used. He let it fall, and it startled him with its booming loudness. He thought he heard footsteps within; the door remained closed. Again Rainsford



lifted the heavy knocker, and let it fall. The door opened then, opened as suddenly as if it were on a spring, and Rainsford stood blinking in the river of glaring gold light that poured out. The first thing Rainsford's eyes discerned was the largest man Rainsford had ever seen—a gigantic creature, solidly made and black-bearded to the waist. In his hand the man held a long-barrel revolver, and he was pointing it straight at Rainsford's heart.

Out of the snarl of beard two small eyes regarded Rainsford.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rainsford, with a smile which he hoped was disarming. "I'm no robber. I fell off a yacht. My name is Sanger Rainsford of New York City."

The menacing look in the eyes did not change. The revolver pointed as rigidly as if the giant were a statue. He gave no sign that he understood Rainsford's words, or that he had even heard them. He was dressed in uniform, a black uniform trimmed with gray astrakhan.

"I'm Sanger Rainsford of New York," Rainsford began again. "I fell off a yacht. I am hungry."

The man's only answer was to raise with his thumb the hammer of his revolver. Then Rainsford saw the man's free hand go to his forehead in a military salute, and he saw him click his heels together and stand at attention. Another man was coming down the broad marble steps, an erect, slender man in evening clothes. He advanced to Rainsford and held out his hand.

In a cultivated voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said: "It is a very great pleasure and honor to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."

Automatically Rainsford shook the man's hand.

"I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but



his thick eyebrows and pointed military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheek bones, a sharp-cut nose, a spare, dark face, the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat. Turning to the giant in uniform, the general made a sign. The giant put away his pistol, saluted, withdrew.

"Ivan is an incredibly strong fellow," remarked the general, "but he has the misfortune to be deaf and dumb. A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage."

"Is he Russian?"

"He is a Cossack," said the general, and his smile showed red lips and pointed teeth. "So am I."

"Come," he said, "we shouldn't be chatting here. We can talk later. Now you want clothes, food, rest. You shall have them. This is a most restful spot."

Ivan had reappeared, and the general spoke to him with lips that moved but gave forth no sound.

"Follow Ivan, if you please, Mr. Rainsford," said the general. "I was about to have my dinner when you came. I'll wait for you. You'll find that my clothes will fit you, I think."

It was to a huge, beam-ceilinged bedroom with a canopied bed big enough for six men that Rainsford followed the silent giant. Ivan laid out an evening suit, and Rainsford, as he put it on, noticed that it came from a London tailor who ordinarily cut and sewed for none below the rank of duke.

The dining room to which Ivan conducted him was in many ways remarkable. There was a medieval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory table where two score men could sit down to eat. About the hall were the mounted heads of many animals—lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears; larger or more perfect specimens Rainsford had never seen. At the great table the general was sitting, alone.

"You'll have a cocktail, Mr. Rainsford," he suggested. The cocktail was surpassingly good; and, Rainsford noted,



the table appointments were of the finest, the linen, the crystal, the silver, the china.

They were eating *borsch*, the rich, red soup with sour cream so dear to Russian palates. Half apologetically General Zaroff said: "We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off the beaten track, you know. Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?"

"Not in the least," declared Rainsford. He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite. But there was one small trait of the general's that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Whenever he looked up from his plate he found the general studying him, appraising him narrowly.

"Perhaps," said General Zaroff, "you were surprised that I recognized your name. You see, I read all books on hunting published in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt."

"You have some wonderful heads here," said Rainsford as he ate a particularly well cooked filet mignon. "That Cape buffalo is the largest I ever saw."

"Oh, that fellow. Yes, he was a monster."

"Did he charge you?"

"Hurled me against a tree," said the general. "Fractured my skull. But I got the brute."

"I've always thought," said Rainsford, "that the Cape buffalo is the most dangerous of all big game."

For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious red-lipped smile. Then he said slowly: "No. You are wrong, sir. The Cape buffalo is not the most dangerous big game." He sipped his wine. "Here in my preserve on this island," he said in the same slow tone, "I hunt more dangerous game."

Rainsford expressed his surprise. "Is there big game on this island?"

The general nodded. "The biggest."

"Really?"



"Oh, it isn't here naturally, of course. I have to stock the island."

"What have you imported, general?" Rainsford asked. "Tigers?"

The general smiled. "No," he said. "Hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities, you see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford."

The general took from his pocket a gold cigarette case and offered his guest a long black cigarette with a silver tip; it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense.

"We will have some capital hunting, you and I," said the general. "I shall be most glad to have your society."

"But what game—" began Rainsford.

"I'll tell you," said the general. "You will be amused, I know. I think I may say, in all modesty, that I have done a rare thing. I have invented a new sensation. May I pour you another glass of port, Mr. Rainsford?"

"Thank you, general."

The general filled both glasses, and said: "God makes some men poets. Some He makes kings, some beggars. Me He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea, and he was an ardent sportsman. When I was only five years old he gave me a little gun, specially made in Moscow for me, to shoot sparrows with. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I killed my first bear in the Caucasus when I was ten. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I went into the army—it was expected of noblemen's sons—and for a time commanded a division of Cossack cavalry, but my real interest was always the hunt. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. It would be impossible for me to tell you how many animals I have killed."

The general puffed at his cigarette.

"After the debacle in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar to stay there. Many



noble Russians lost everything. I, luckily, had invested heavily in American securities, so I shall never have to open a tea room in Monte Carlo or drive a taxi in Paris. Naturally, I continued to hunt—grizzlies in your Rockies, crocodiles in the Ganges, rhinoceroses in East Africa. It was in Africa that the Cape buffalo hit me and laid me up for six months. As soon as I recovered I started for the Amazon to hunt jaguars, for I had heard they were unusually cunning. They weren't." The Cossack sighed. "They were no match at all for a hunter with his wits about him, and a high-powered rifle. I was bitterly disappointed. I was lying in my tent with a splitting headache one night when a terrible thought pushed its way into my mind. Hunting was beginning to bore me! And hunting, remember, had been my life. I have heard that in America business men often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life."

"Yes, that's so," said Rainsford.

The general smiled. "I had no wish to go to pieces," he said. "I must do something. Now, mine is an analytical mind, Mr. Rainsford. Doubtless that is why I enjoy the problems of the chase."

"No doubt, General Zaroff."

"So," continued the general, "I asked myself why the hunt no longer fascinated me. You are much younger than I am, Mr. Rainsford, and have not hunted as much, but you perhaps can guess the answer."

"What was it?"

"Simply this: hunting had ceased to be what you call 'a sporting proposition.' It had become too easy. I always got my quarry. Always. There is no greater bore than perfection."

The general lit a fresh cigarette.

"No animal had a chance with me any more. That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for reason. When I thought of this it was a tragic moment for me, I can tell you."

Rainsford leaned across the table, absorbed in what his host was saying.



"It came to me as an inspiration what I must do," the general went on.

"And that was?"

The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and surmounted it with success. "I had to invent a new animal to hunt," he said.

"A new animal? You are joking."

"Not at all," said the general. "I never joke about hunting. I needed a new animal. I found one. So I bought this island, built this house, and here I do my hunting. The island is perfect for my purposes—there are jungles with a maze of trails in them, hills, swamps——"

"But the animal, General Zaroff?"

"Oh," said the general, "it supplies me with the most exciting hunting in the world. No other hunting compares with it for an instant. Every day I hunt, and I never grow bored now, for I have a quarry with which I can match my wits."

Rainsford's bewilderment showed in his face.

"I wanted the ideal animal to hunt," explained the general. "So I said: 'What are the attributes of an ideal quarry?' And the answer was, of course: 'It must have courage, cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason.'"

"But no animal can reason," objected Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "there is one that can."

"But you can't mean——" gasped Rainsford.

"And why not?"

"I can't believe you are serious, General Zaroff. This is a grisly joke."

"Why should I not be serious? I am speaking of hunting."

"Hunting? Good God, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder."

The general laughed with entire good nature. He regarded Rainsford quizzically. "I refuse to believe that so modern and civilized a young man as you seem to be harbors romantic ideas about the values of human life. Surely your experiences in the war——" He stopped.



"Did not make me condone cold-blooded murder," finished Rainsford stiffly.

Laughter shook the general. "How extraordinarily droll you are!" he said. "One does not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such a naïve, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view. It's like finding a snuff-box in a limousine. Ah, well, doubtless you had Puritan ancestors. So many Americans appear to have had. I'll wager you'll forget your notions when you go hunting with me. You've a genuine new thrill in store for you, Mr. Rainsford."

"Thank you, I'm a hunter, not a murderer."

"Dear me," said the general, quite unruffled, "again that unpleasant word. But I think I can show you that your scruples are quite ill founded."

"Yes?"

"Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if needs be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I not use my gift? If I wish to hunt, why should I not? I hunt the scum of the earth—sailors from tramp ships—lascars, blacks, Chinese, whites, mongrels—a thoroughbred horse or hound is worth more than a score of them."

"But they are men," said Rainsford hotly.

"Precisely," said the general. "That is why I use them. It gives me pleasure. They can reason, after a fashion. So they are dangerous."

"But where do you get them?"

The general's left eyelid fluttered down in a wink. "This island is called Ship-Trap," he answered. "Sometimes an angry god of the high seas sends them to me. Sometimes, when Providence is not so kind, I help Providence a bit. Come to the window with me."

Rainsford went to the window and looked out toward the sea.

"Watch! Out there!" exclaimed the general, pointing into the night. Rainsford's eyes saw only blackness, and then,



as the general pressed a button, far out to sea Rainsford saw the flash of lights.

The general chuckled. "They indicate a channel," he said, "where there's none: giant rocks with razor edges crouch like a sea monster with wide-open jaws. They can crush a ship as easily as I crush this nut." He dropped a walnut on the hardwood floor and brought his heel grinding down on it. "Oh, yes," he said casually, as if in answer to a question, "I have electricity. We try to be civilized here."

"Civilized? And you shoot down men?"

A trace of anger was in the general's black eyes, but it was there for but a second, and he said, in his most pleasant manner: "Dear me, what a righteous young man you are! I assure you I do not do the thing you suggest. That would be barbarous. I treat these visitors with every consideration. They get plenty of good food and exercise. They get into splendid physical condition. You shall see for yourself to-morrow."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll visit my training school," smiled the general. "It's in the cellar. I have about a dozen pupils down there now. They're from the Spanish bark *San Lucar* that had the bad luck to go on the rocks out there. A very inferior lot, I regret to say. Poor specimens and more accustomed to the deck than to the jungle."

He raised his hand, and Ivan, who served as waiter, brought thick Turkish coffee. Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.

"It's a game, you see," pursued the general blandly. "I suggest to one of them that we go hunting. I give him a supply of food and an excellent hunting knife. I give him three hours' start. I am to follow, armed only with a pistol of the smallest calibre and range. If my quarry eludes me for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him"—the general smiled—"he loses."

"Suppose he refuses to be hunted?"

"Oh," said the general, "I give him his option, of course. He need not play that game if he doesn't wish to. If he does not wish to hunt, I turn him over to Ivan. Ivan once had



the honor of serving as official knouter to the Great White Czar, and he has his own ideas of sport. Invariably, Mr. Rainsford, invariably they choose the hunt."

"And if they win?"

The smile on the general's face widened. "To date I have not lost," he said.

Then he added, hastily: "I don't wish you to think me a braggart, Mr. Rainsford. Many of them afford only the most elementary sort of problem. Occasionally I strike a tartar. One almost did win. I eventually had to use the dogs."

"The dogs?"

"This way, please. I'll show you."

The general steered Rainsford to a window. The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made grotesque patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.

"A rather good lot, I think," observed the general. "They are let out at seven every night. If anyone should try to get into my house—or out of it—something extremely regrettable would occur to him." He hummed a snatch of song from the *Folies Bergères*.

"And now," said the general, "I want to show you my new collection of heads. Will you come with me to the library?"

"I hope," said Rainsford, "that you will excuse me to-night, General Zaroff. I'm really not feeling at all well."

"Ah, indeed?" the general inquired solicitously. "Well, I suppose that's only natural, after your long swim. You need a good, restful night's sleep. Tomorrow you'll feel like a new man, I'll wager. Then we'll hunt, eh? I've one rather promising prospect——"

Rainsford was hurrying from the room.

"Sorry you can't go with me to-night," called the general. "I expect rather fair sport—a big, strong black. He looks



resourceful— Well, good night, Mr. Rainsford; I hope that you have a good night's rest."

The bed was good and the pajamas of the softest silk, and he was tired in every fiber of his being, but nevertheless Rainsford could not quiet his brain with the opiate of sleep. He lay, eyes wide open. Once he thought he heard stealthy steps in the corridor outside his room. He sought to throw open the door; it would not open. He went to the window and looked out. His room was high up in one of the towers. The lights of the château were out now, and it was dark and silent, but there was a fragment of sallow moon, and by its wan light he could see, dimly, the courtyard; there, weaving in and out in the pattern of shadow, were black, noiseless forms; the hounds heard him at the window and looked up, expectantly, with their green eyes. Rainsford went back to the bed and lay down. By many methods he tried to put himself to sleep. He had achieved a doze when, just as morning began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

General Zaroff did not appear until luncheon. He was dressed faultlessly in the tweeds of a country squire. He was solicitous about the state of Rainsford's health.

"As for me," sighed the general, "I do not feel so well. I am worried, Mr. Rainsford. Last night I detected traces of my old complaint."

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said: "Ennui. Boredom."

Then, taking a second helping of Crêpes Suzette, the general explained: "The hunting was not good last night. The fellow lost his head. He made a straight trail that offered no problems at all. That's the trouble with these sailors; they have dull brains to begin with, and they do not know how to get about in the woods. They do excessively stupid and obvious things. It's most annoying. Will you have another glass of Chablis, Mr. Rainsford?"

"General," said Rainsford firmly, "I wish to leave this island at once."

The general raised his thickets of eyebrows; he seemed



hurt. "But, my dear fellow," the general protested, "you've only just come. You've had no hunting——"

"I wish to go to-day," said Rainsford. He saw the dead black eyes of the general on him, studying him. General Zaroff's face suddenly brightened.

He filled Rainsford's glass with venerable Chablis from a dusty bottle.

"To-night," said the general, "we will hunt—you and I."

Rainsford shook his head. "No, general," he said. "I will not hunt."

The general shrugged his shoulders and delicately ate a hothouse grape. "As you wish, my friend," he said. "The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan's?"

He nodded toward the corner to where the giant stood, scowling, his thick arms crossed on his hogshead of chest.

"You don't mean——" cried Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "have I not told you I always mean what I say about hunting? This is really an inspiration. I drink to a foeman worthy of my steel—at last."

The general raised his glass, but Rainsford sat staring at him.

"You'll find this game worth playing," the general said enthusiastically. "Your brain against mine. Your woodcraft against mine. Your strength and stamina against mine. Outdoor chess! And the stake is not without value, eh?"

"And if I win——" began Rainsford huskily.

"I'll cheerfully acknowledge myself defeated if I do not find you by midnight of the third day," said General Zaroff.

"My sloop will place you on the mainland near a town."

The general read what Rainsford was thinking.

"Oh, you can trust me," said the Cossack. "I will give you my word as a gentleman and a sportsman. Of course you, in turn, must agree to say nothing of your visit here."

"I'll agree to nothing of the kind," said Rainsford.

"Oh," said the general, "in that case—— But why dis-



cuss it now? Three days hence we can discuss it over a bottle of Veuve Cliquot, unless——”

The general sipped his wine.

Then a businesslike air animated him. “Ivan,” he said to Rainsford, “will supply you with hunting clothes, food, a knife. I suggest you wear moccasins; they leave a poorer trail. I suggest too that you avoid the big swamp in the southeast corner of the island. We call it Death Swamp. There’s quicksand there. One foolish fellow tried it. The deplorable part of it was that Lazarus followed him. You can imagine my feelings, Mr. Rainsford. I loved Lazarus; he was the finest hound in my pack. Well, I must beg you to excuse me now. I always take a siesta after lunch. You’ll hardly have time for a nap, I fear. You’ll want to start, no doubt. I shall not follow till dusk. Hunting at night is so much more exciting than by day, don’t you think? Au revoir, Mr. Rainsford, au revoir.”

General Zaroff, with a deep, courtly bow, strolled from the room.

From another door came Ivan. Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist. . . .

Rainsford had fought his way through the bush for two hours. “I must keep my nerve. I must keep my nerve,” he said through tight teeth.

He had not been entirely clear-headed when the château gates snapped shut behind him. His whole idea at first was to put distance between himself and General Zaroff, and, to this end, he had plunged along, spurred on by the sharp rowels of something very like panic. Now he had got a grip on himself, had stopped, and was taking stock of himself and the situation.

He saw that straight flight was futile; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea. He was in a picture with a frame of water, and his operations, clearly, must take place within that frame.



"I'll give him a trail to follow," muttered Rainsford, and he struck off from the rude path he had been following into the trackless wilderness. He executed a series of intricate loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox. Night found him leg-weary, with hands and face lashed by the branches, on a thickly wooded ridge. He knew it would be insane to blunder on through the dark, even if he had the strength. His need for rest was imperative and he thought: "I have played the fox, now I must play the cat of the fable." A big tree with a thick trunk and outspread branches was near by, and, taking care to leave not the slightest mark, he climbed up into the crotch, and stretching out on one of the broad limbs, after a fashion, rested. Rest brought him new confidence and almost a feeling of security. Even so zealous a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark. But, perhaps, the general was a devil—

An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake, and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning when a dingy gray was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focused Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb, and through a screen of leaves, almost as thick as tapestry, he watched. The thing that was approaching him was a man.

It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's right hand held something small and metallic—an automatic pistol.

The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent incenselike smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils. Rainsford held his breath. The



general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?

Rainsford did not want to believe what his reason told him was true, but the truth was as evident as the sun that had by now pushed through the morning mists. The general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day's sport! The Cossack was a cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

"I will not lose my nerve. I will not."

He slid down from the tree, and struck off again into the woods. His face was set and he forced the machinery of his mind to function. Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned precariously on a smaller, living one. Throwing off his sack of food, Rainsford took his knife from its sheath and began to work with all his energy.

The job was finished at last, and he threw himself down behind a fallen log a hundred feet away. He did not have to wait long. The cat was coming again to play with the mouse.

Following the trail with the sureness of a bloodhound, came General Zaroff. Nothing escaped those searching black eyes, no crushed blade of grass, no bent twig, no mark, no



matter how faint, in the moss. So intent was the Cossack on his stalking that he was upon the thing Rainsford had made before he saw it. His foot touched the protruding bough that was the trigger. Even as he touched it, the general sensed his danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape. But he was not quite quick enough; the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow on the shoulder as it fell; but for his alertness, he must have been smashed beneath it. He staggered, but he did not fall; nor did he drop his revolver. He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping his heart, heard the general's mocking laugh ring through the jungle.

"Rainsford," called the general, "if you are within sound of my voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you. Not many men know how to make a Malay man-catcher. Luckily, for me, I too have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting, Mr. Rainsford. I am going now to have my wound dressed; it's only a slight one. But I shall be back. I shall be back."

When the general, nursing his bruised shoulder, had gone, Rainsford took up his flight again. It was flight now, a desperate, hopeless flight, that carried him on for some hours. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on. The ground grew softer under his moccasins; the vegetation grew ranker, denser; insects bit him savagely. Then, as he stepped forward, his foot sank into the ooze. He tried to wrench it back, but the muck sucked viciously at his foot as if it were a giant leech. With a violent effort, he tore his foot loose. He knew where he was now. Death Swamp and its quicksand.

His hands were tight closed as if his nerve were something tangible that some one in the darkness was trying to tear from his grip. The softness of the earth had given him an idea. He stepped back from the quicksand a dozen feet or so and, like some huge prehistoric beaver, he began to dig.

Rainsford had dug himself in in France when a second's delay meant death. That had been a placid pastime compared to his digging now. The pit grew deeper; when it



## 246 *The World's Best Short Stories of 1925*

was above his shoulders, he climbed out and from some hard saplings cut stakes and sharpened them to a fine point. These stakes he planted in the bottom of the pit with the point sticking up. With flying fingers he wove a rough carpet of weeds and branches and with it he covered the mouth of the pit. Then, wet with sweat and aching with tiredness, he crouched behind the stump of a lightning-charred tree.

He knew his pursuer was coming; he heard the padding sound of feet on the soft earth, and the night breeze brought him the perfume of the general's cigarette. It seemed to Rainsford that the general was coming with unusual swiftness; he was not feeling his way along, foot by foot. Rainsford, crouching there, could not see the general, nor could he see the pit. He lived a year in a minute. Then he felt an impulse to cry aloud with joy, for he heard the sharp crackle of the breaking branches as the cover of the pit gave way; he heard the sharp scream of pain as the pointed stakes found their mark. He leaped up from his place of concealment. Then he cowered back. Three feet from the pit a man was standing, with an electric torch in his hand.

"You've done well, Rainsford," the voice of the general called. "Your Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs. Again you score. I think, Mr. Rainsford, I'll see what you can do against my whole pack. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

At daybreak Rainsford, lying near the swamp, was awakened by a sound that made him know that he had new things to learn about fear. It was a distant sound, faint and wavering, but he knew it. It was the baying of a pack of hounds.

Rainsford knew he could do one of two things. He could stay where he was and wait. That was suicide. He could flee. That was postponing the inevitable. For a moment he stood there, thinking. An idea that held a wild chance came to him, and, tightening his belt, he headed away from the swamp.

The baying of the hounds drew nearer, then still nearer, nearer, ever nearer. On a ridge Rainsford climbed a tree. Down a watercourse, not a quarter of a mile away, he could



see the bush moving. Straining his eyes, he saw the lean figure of General Zaroff; just ahead of him Rainsford made out another figure whose wide shoulders surged through the tall jungle weeds; it was the giant Ivan, and he seemed pulled forward by some unseen force; Rainsford knew that Ivan must be holding the pack in leash.

They would be on him any minute now. His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda. He slid down the tree. He caught hold of a springy young sapling and to it he fastened his hunting knife, with the blade pointing down the trail; with a bit of wild grapevine he tied back the sapling. Then he ran for his life. The hounds raised their voices as they hit the fresh scent. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

He had to stop to get his breath. The baying of the hounds stopped abruptly, and Rainsford's heart stopped too. They must have reached the knife.

He shinned excitedly up a tree and looked back. His pursuers had stopped. But the hope that was in Rainsford's brain when he climbed died, for he saw in the shallow valley that General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife, driven by the recoil of the springing tree, had not wholly failed.

Rainsford had hardly tumbled to the ground when the pack took up the cry again.

"Nerve, nerve, nerve!" he panted, as he dashed along. A blue gap showed between the trees dead ahead. Ever nearer drew the hounds. Rainsford forced himself on toward that gap. He reached it. It was the shore of the sea. Across a cove he could see the gloomy gray stone of the château. Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped far out into the sea. . . .

When the general and his pack reached the place by the sea, the Cossack stopped. For some minutes he stood regarding the blue-green expanse of water. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he sat down, took a drink of brandy from



a silver flask, lit a perfumed cigarette, and hummed a bit from "Madame Butterfly."

General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great paneled dining hall that evening. With it he had a bottle of Pol Roger and half a bottle of Chambertin. Two slight annoyances kept him from perfect enjoyment. One was the thought that it would be difficult to replace Ivan; the other was that his quarry had escaped him; of course, the American hadn't played the game—so thought the general as he tasted his after-dinner liqueur. In his library he read, to sooth himself, from the works of Marcus Aurelius. At ten he went up to his bedroom. He was deliciously tired, he said to himself, as he locked himself in. There was a little moonlight, so, before turning on his light, he went to the window and looked down at the courtyard. He could see the great hounds, and he called: "Better luck another time," to them. Then he switched on the light.

A man, who had been hiding in the curtains of the bed, was standing there.

"Rainsford!" screamed the general. "How in God's name did you get here?"

"Swam," said Rainsford. "I found it quicker than walking through the jungle."

The general sucked in his breath and smiled. "I congratulate you," he said. "You have won the game."

Rainsford did not smile. "I am still a beast at bay," he said, in a low, hoarse voice. "Get ready, General Zaroff."

The general made one of his deepest bows. "I see," he said. "Splendid! One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford." . . .

He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided.



## XI

### The Spring Flight

By INEZ HAYNES IRWIN

*Selected by* HARRY P. BURTON, *McCall's*

The first chilling shadows of the April dusk had settled over London when Shakspeare drew rein in front of the wig-maker's. The day had been untimely hot. His horse was in a lather and he too was dusty and tired; fretted. The city smells caught him; and in that mood he was prepared to dub Silver and Muggle the foulest corner in London. For a moment, nobody within seemed to take note of his arrival and then a sudden babble burst. "'Tis Will, husband! 'Tis Will Shakspeare!" he caught the characteristic tinkle of Mistress Montjoy's voice, turned shrill with delight. In an instant both the Montjoys were hurrying through the doorway on to the cobbles; Mistress Montjoy, an azure dart, swift and sure and smooth as a swan; the long side-ruffles of her white muslin overdress shearing the air, her iron-gray curls maintaining their perfect alignment. Montjoy himself, big-nosed, mottle-faced, dull-eyed, the puce of his suit the exact shade of his hard cheeks, not a hair of his glossy brown wig disturbed, moved more slowly from force of weight, bulk, or perhaps from his instinctive dislike of Shakspeare. Behind, the doorway filled for an instant with crop-headed 'prentice lads, gaping; then emptied precipitately as Montjoy threw his heavy glance back on them. But by this time, Mistress Montjoy had Shakspeare's hand; had smacked him heartily.

"Well, well, lad!" she exclaimed. "Welcome and plenty! We did not expect thee for a month yet. How camest thou to London so early?"



Shakspeare shook hands with his host. He laughed, but not mirthfully. "Upon my word, mistress, of that you know as much as I. A whim! An impulse! I work not well these days. I've worked not well for months. There's strange slowness to my mind. And then of a sudden, Stratford sounded dead and London smelled fresh. Is my chamber vacant, mistress? I can go a dozen places else."

"'Tis vacant and aching for thee, Will," Mistress Montjoy asserted. "But why stand we here for all London to jibe at? Come ye in, lad!"

Montjoy unstrapped the saddle bags, handed them to a boy whom he summoned by another heavy glance, and led the horse away. Shakspeare followed his hostess into the house. A half-dozen apprentices, sorting or stringing hair, were making, now that the master had disappeared, but a pretense of work. They gaped; cast slant glances. At one side, a trio of Montjoy's master assistants, their weaving-needles stuck in wigs fitted to featureless, head-shaped blocks on the long table, idled openly. A girl's face, set with two stark, blue O's of eye and one wondering soft red O of mouth, peered through a door.

"A jug of water, Nan!" Mistress Montjoy called shrilly after her. "And fresh face linen, Joan, for the guest chamber! Ink, a quill, and paper! Candles! Hurry, wenches! Fetch the saddle bags, Con!"

Close on her words came clatter and clash from the kitchen. Mistress Montjoy ran nimbly up the stairs and Shakspeare followed close on the heels which flittered like stripes of red out of the azure petticoat. They entered a wide, low-ceiled room at the back of the house. Talking volubly, Mistress Montjoy threw open the casements of the two windows. Coolness, alternately staled by the stench from the city streets and freshened by odours from Mistress Montjoy's early-blooming garden, flowed into the unaired languor of the room. Came also the twilight sounds: the near shouts of children at play—boys at ball, little girls singing, "London Bridge Is Falling Down"; the far, faint cry of the apprentices on Cheapside, 'What d'ye lack? What d'ye lack?' The flood of the silvery-umber twilight, stained scarlet from the



sunset, oozed into the room, filmed the fine polish of the floor as with a visible wetness. A low, wide bed, a broad, use-blackened table, two stools, a carved chest, made black hulks in this rose-argent sea. Shakspeare stood in the centre of the room, a little dazed, staring about him. He was conscious alternately of a sense of fatigue . . . relief . . . release . . . fatigue . . . something like peace . . . fatigue. . . .

"Thou'rt tired, lad," Mistress Montjoy commented, compassionately. "Yet how comest thou worn with that sun-blackened face? Thine eyes are lacklustre too."

It was true that though country tan had turned his olive colouring almost black, Shakspeare's eyes were hollow. The faint luminosity that lay in their hazel depths seemed to come, not from within, but from without—as though the force back of them had died down, leaving them to reflect mere light. Nevertheless, his moustached lips were firm and full; and they produced a smile whose quick glint gave to his face all the candid pleasantness which had distinguished its old-time mirth. The flash of smile lasted but an instant. The look which was normal to him—of a quiet, a reserve almost enigmatic, and touched now with weariness—blanketed it completely.

Mechanically Shakspeare sat down; extended his feet for the boy to pull off his boots. Mechanically he watched Mistress Montjoy rummage in his saddle bags until she found his shoes; as mechanically he watched the boy draw them on. "Tired!" he repeated. "Tired. Aye. My body's tired. I've ridden four days. But that's not the whole tale. My mind's tired. In truth, I'm staled by country life and country folk and country thought. The quiet . . . the damned, dead, dull quiet. . . . And maybe by age . . . I know not." He laughed out again, mirthlessly. "By Lady, thou'll not believe it, mistress, but I, Will Shakspeare, the industrious apprentice—'tis weeks since I have writ a line. Hours I've sat, my head in my hands, my brain stewing, festering. Then five days ago, on to my horse I leaped; turned his nose Londonward—and here am I. How I came, or by what roads, or what degrees, I know not. One night



at Oxford at St. George's Inn comes clear; beside that naught but long days of dust and rain."

Mistress Montjoy's brisk glance played a gleam of blue obliqueness upon him. "And Mistress Davenant," she asked in even tones, "how goes it with her? And thy god-child?" She removed his cape; took his hat from his unresisting fingers.

"Well, well; both well," Shakspeare answered. His tone was absent. And when the two maids entered—Nan, blue-eyed and flaxen-curved with the full hips of the country; Joan, dark and waxy, shapely too, though only a slim bit of cockney flesh—he considered their movements but absently. Nan placed candles on the table; took Shakspeare's cape and hat; disappeared. Joan put a pewter ewer and basin on the stand, wiped up a slop of water; disappeared. Nan returned with a slender sheaf of paper, a pewter inkstand, a quill; Joan with linen. All the time, Shakspeare was answering Mistress Montjoy's inquiries about his family.

Yes, Anne was well. And Sukey and Judy were well. Joan was well. And her three boys, Will and Tom and Michael, were well. Sukey's little Betty—for the first time Shakspeare's jaded face gleamed brilliantly as he talked of his only granddaughter—bloomed fairly. Yes, Betty was a great girl for her age, a gay, winsome, lovesome child, the pet of the family. Outwardly, Mistress Montjoy seemed to take no note of the perfunctory quality in Shakspeare's answers. But she finally interrupted the flow of her own interrogations with orders to the two maids for supper: "Fish to be fried . . . a meat pie . . . a gooseberry tart, Joan. And plenty of ale, Nan . . . and cakes. . . . Now hurry, wenches!" And on the instant of their departure—had Will heard of the new theatre, the Hope? The town was full of the talk of it. It was to be an addition to the Paris Gardens. Henslowe and Meade—surely Will remembered Meade, the great roaring, hairy bear of a waterman!—were building it. There would also be a new inn built in the Gardens, The Dancing Bears, and there Meade would live. It was to be the finest theatre in London, so they said. . . . Yes, for plays. Oh, and, of course, for bear- and bull-bait-



ing too. They were a shrewd pair, those two. Had he heard they were opening the old Swan? And indeed London was play mad. Surely Shakspeare knew that the unreputable country parson, Daborne, whom astute old Henslowe had rescued from a debtors' prison, was going to have a company of acting children. Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* had proved a poor thing. And for her own part, she considered that Fletcher would never hit the public taste alone. But with Beaumont—It was true enough that their *Maid's Tragedy* had scantily pleased. But consider the *Scornful Lady*, which the town had well liked, and their *Philaster*, over which it had gone mad! Chapman had deserted play-writing; was away somewhere, Southampton's guest, translating the great ancient Greek poet Homer, a task that would take months. Permitting her guest to extract what comfort he might from this schoolmanly preoccupation of his rival, Mistress Montjoy veered swiftly away from talk of Chapman, but so skilfully that, in another moment, they were discussing Jonson's latest success as though it flowed as a matter of course from the talk of Chapman and Homer. Ben's *Alchemist*, according to Mistress Montjoy, had positively fired London. Burbage, as usual, was playing the lead and according to Mistress Montjoy, with rare spirit. She confessed to as great a liking for Burbage as a misliking for his rival, Field. Compare Burbage with Field. She had seen his Richard—here Mistress Montjoy pulled herself up short as though suddenly remembering that her guest was a playwright—and Will's *Richard Third*—three times. Burbage stirred the blood, whereas Field— She herself had slept listening to Field's slow, cold chanting. She favoured the *Silent Woman* above all Ben's work—oh, yes, far beyond the *Alchemist*. But for an afternoon's entertainment, give her the *Woman Killed with Kindness* or the *Shoemaker's Holiday*. The woman did not live whose heart could not respond to the sadness of the one and the gaiety of the other. She had always said and would always maintain that Ben knew naught about women. She considered that the *Silent Woman* proved this contention. Had not *Epicæne*, his best woman, turned out to be a man? For herself, she liked plays that



dealt with people like those about her; women she could have been and in scenes she might have known. Not for her the bloodless nymphs of the *Faithful Shepherdess* or *Philaster* on the one hand, the strange walking dolls that Ben made on the other. As for the *Woman Killed with Kindness*—there was a heroine might have been her own sister, Bess, so natural was she! And so on, and on, and on until Montjoy's grating voice called from below, "Aho there! Shall we never eat? 'Tis well said, 'A woman's tongue. . . .'"

The slow spring twilight had settled into complete darkness when Shakspeare at last pulled away from the Montjoys. A long, slim new moon had slunk almost to the horizon. Yet it shed light enough to reveal a faint wet wash of street; blank parallel stretches of half-timbered walls; black rectangles of street signs. The night had turned chill; a sharp and knifelike wind searched out the openings in his cape. He drew it closer about him as he turned in the direction of Cheapside. Physically, the bath, the delectable hot supper, the delicious cool ale had refreshed him. But mentally——! He could not say that Mistress Montjoy's chatter had inspired him; at times, even, it had hurt: but at least for a while it had ousted from his mind the accumulated melancholies of the last three months. Now that her cheerful presence had gone, those humours flowed back in a sinister black flood. And indeed, one or two of Mistress Montjoy's remarks had pricked into faint being a dead desire, a lost regret. . . . Southampton and Anne . . . For an instant the old pain seared a fiery trail across his heart. Women named Anne had played important parts in his life, he reflected; Anne, his sister, the playmate of his childhood—pink-and-white, doll-faced, dead ere she had matured. Anne Hathaway, the sweetheart of his boyhood! Sleek-haired was Anne Hathaway and dove-eyed; the brown of the country sun struggling with the pink of the country air for the mastery of her cheeks. Anne, as round and warm as a pigeon—and as unthinking. And then Anne Davenant, the passion of his maturity. What had there been about Anne Davenant that could make a half-decade of agony in a sane man's life? She



was not beautiful. He himself, in one of his bitter rebellions against her spell, had avowed that in verse. But there was something— No, her face was not beautiful; it was the colour of whey and it kept, except at the creeping-in of her silver smile, a strange, still look. And her little flat figure was not beautiful, though it was so delicate that she moved like a shadow. Nor her jet-black, straight, coarse hair. Nor her rather slitted, heavily lidded eyes, so shadow-smooched, so vivid and sparkless. But the combination of all this with her mouth! Surely no woman had ever owned a mouth like Anne's—so wide-centred and deep-cornered, so cool and so warm, so lusciously crimson that, flaring out of the pallor of her face, it was like a blood-hot signal to the senses. Southampton and Anne . . . The image of his friend—and rival—suddenly hung clear in his mind: the lithe, long, white-skinned youth with his chestnut curls and his brilliant colour; his brown eyes shot with red lights; his dashing aspect and his dreaming look; his profundities of thought; his elegances of expression. Well, at least now he could put the two names together in his mind without a sense of utter spiritual annihilation. And even as his pain dulled, their images vanished from his mental vision. His real problem lifted its gaunt face there.

Should he ever write again? Had it gone for good—that rushing, flooding impulse which, on command, had turned his youth to a creative orgy, had sometimes evolved and finished a play in a week? Was this paralysis but a temporary mental deadness or was it old age . . . the flickering out of the creative faculty? He had accommodated himself to many things in a lifetime of work. Once he had created the dramatic mode, had led. Now he followed, aped other men's efforts and at, it seemed, a slower and slower pace. Those younger blades of the drama—Beaumont, Fletcher. . . . How *they* poured it forth, and in what variety and with what felicity! Well, he must follow where their star led. Aye, he was content to follow, if he could only produce a big thing in the new mode. But he could produce nothing. What had happened to him or what was the fault in him? Always he had wondered—and now he considered the problem afresh



—if a man's work were so closely engaged with a man's life that he must live a life especially constructed for that work. For himself, try as hard as he could to disengage himself from mortal tangles, he had had to live long segments of his life as though his work had not even existed. Southampton had, of course, dominated such a segment; Anne Davenant another. And whatever the cost of his work, he would not part with even the memory of that magic madness. Long living it had been with him at first and short working; then longer and harder working, shorter and shorter living; until now life was all working. Perhaps that was the flaw in him—that very concentration may have marred his quality.

Yet there was Ben! No man had worked harder than Ben; and Ben had for decades lived a life that was but pendant to his work. Of course, Ben's youth had sown vigorous wild oats . . . that interval in the Low Countries. For that matter, Ben had killed his man and gone to prison. . . . But he had chosen London for the scene of the major portion of his work and in filthy, greasy, stinking London he had stayed, dominating the literary life of the town as indeed—there had never been an atom of jealousy in Shakspeare's admiration for Ben—he deserved to dominate it. On the other hand—Marlowe! At his youth's peak, Kit had thrown himself into the flaming abyss at the very centre of life, had let its fires eat his vitals; had died of his love of life; had died at the hands of life itself. Did Marlowe have the right of it? And Kyd and Greene—those wasters of heydey? “Was this the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Illium?” God, it was worth going out in one hell-hot stab at joy to have written those lines. They too—the whole trio—had stayed in the city, had drunk deep of its poison. Was, after all, the swift thrust at life the wiser way? However, it was useless now to regret that he had not followed other men's paths, led they to sanity or madness; for *he* could not stay in the city, try as hard as he would. Just as London had held him in hot enchantment in the beginning, she had released him frost-cold in the end. And then the country had begun to pull on him. He had deafened his ears to the luring plea as long as he could. But in the end,



it had haled him back to Stratford—that low, wild-dove call. Another motive came in here—in honesty he had to admit it. He wanted to write the Shakspeare name strong on Stratford life again. It was a sacred duty; his father had laid it on him. *That* was one of the things a man must do; he had no choice there. And yet again—doubt. Should a poet engage in commerce with sacred obligations? What had he to do with that pale-blooded wench, Duty? Was not the poet his own law? Well, like the oaf he was, docilely, without question, he had followed the incitement of the Shakspeare blood. He had returned to Stratford. He had made the Shakspeare strain a power. New Place was pointed out, gaped at. . . . And Anne had risen in importance as his position increased. Of course, there had been the old wound of his years of absence in London, but that wound had healed. Anne was a placid woman whose heart held its own tenderness, rejected its own bitterness. And fate had brought her fair social fortune in her two daughters. Sukey had made a notable match; Judy had been bridesmaid at the Harvard wedding. . . .

Perhaps it was because he was not entirely of the city nor entirely of the country that he wrote well of neither. The *Woman Killed with Kindness* . . . the *Shoemaker's Holiday* . . . Mistress Montjoy's babble again. . . . No, *he* never could equal either Heywood or Dekker in their chosen fields, he told himself. Once in an attempt to rewrite *Three Ladies from London*, he had essayed to paint the town and once, in *Cardenna*, the country. But he had failed; failed so lamentably that he gave over the blurred, confused, half-written things, the one to Heywood, the other to Fletcher. He himself liked to write of lands so far away, of times so long ago, or of countries and ages so entirely imagined that no critic could dispute his fancyings. Such a fantasy his new play was to be! If ever it came into existence at all . . . God, how tortured he was with its formlessness and vagueness! An island. Somewhere? No, nowhere. An island floating between sea and sky. An island as airy and gossamer as a cloud, as delicately imagined as a vision. And on it three beings. A maiden. A slim, pure, virgin thing,



Mirandola? Mirala? Mironda? No, Miranda. Yes, that was it, *Miranda*. And an old man, a wiseacre, a sage—Prospero. An old man who had exorcised that island in a breath, could banish it in an eye-wink! “We are of such stuff as dreams are made of and our little life is rounded with a . . . sleep.” Already some of the lines were drifting into his head. And then for contrast with those two, unnamed as yet, unbodied—for, strain mind and soul as he would, he could not see him—an ugly, misshapen creature, hobgoblin, leprechaun, gargoyle. The whole thing should be a film of faery—a work to make the *Night's Dream* seem of the earth and clodlike. The name was clear, *A Summer's Tale*.

And that was all!

That had been all for three months. The island and the three people on it and the name, *A Summer's Tale*. Perhaps it was too much of faery. At any rate, it hung impalpable, shapeless and colourless in the high, dry ether of his mind. Months, months, months, it had been since that fiery uprushing torrent of the spirit had made precipitation. Nothing he had done would produce more. Not thinking until his brain turned. Not reading until his eyes ached. Not walking the lanes about Stratford until his legs cramped. Not talking until he hated the town and every soul in it. Not dreaming. Not cursing. So now to see what London would do—the London which, at his appearance, had opened her gate, tempted him with the clue to success, and then, by the mere poisonous hap that Anne Davenant visited there her sister, fed like a cold-crazed, thirst-crazed monster on the fires and dews of his youth.

It seemed to Shakspeare that he had been walking a long time, so fast and so painfully had his thoughts sped. Yet, in reality, it had been but a few moments from Silver Street to Cheapside and along Cheapside to the Mermaid Tavern. Only an occasional figure now and then had passed him on the street, and now he entered a silent courtyard. Hooded wagons made vague, looming shapes under a sprinkle of stars. In the shadows, horses fretted with hoof-pawings and tail-swishings. A white cat flashed from under his feet. But no human stirred, and the Inn was quiet. He made off



at an angle toward the left, and at a corner room on the first floor, knocked with a peculiar and vibrant tattoo. Without waiting for a summons to enter, he opened the door and stood on the threshold of a fair-sized room, light in colour, heavily raftered, with big casement windows on two walls and a vast fireplace at one end.

His appearance produced an instant of petrification among the half circle of men sitting about the fire. Then, "By God, 'tis Will!" exclaimed the huge creature who was the keystone of their arch. He raised his unwieldy bulk off the double-sized stool which supported it and paddled like a hurrying bear toward the door. It was a bear-hug, too, to which he subjected Shakspeare, and after the embrace was over, he patted him on shoulders, arms, and back with his monstrous paws. "God's wounds, I'm glad to see you. Marry, you smell of the country, lad—clover and new-mown hay."

The others, except one who sat writing in a corner, crowded about Shakspeare. That other was a tall, lean, yellow fellow of a cadaverous and moustached mien. He made a sudden gesture, and instantly they all chanted in unison: "An upstart crow, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide, supposes he is as able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you!" They ended with a vigorous "Hail, Will of Avon, hail!"

Shakspeare grinned as he shook hands with them—Burbage and Beaumont, Fletcher and Hemminge.

"How beats the tiger's heart?" the man in the corner asked cheerfully, still bending to his work.

"Fiery as of yore," Shakspeare averred, shaking his disengaged hand. "On my word, Tom Heywood," he declared to his interlocutor, "and be God my witness, when I departed for Stratford last spring, I left you scribbling in this corner and on my return, I find you busy at the self-same spot. How many plays have you writ these twelve months?"

"Five!" Heywood declared laconically, stopping to twist his long, thin, out-standing yellow moustaches and to impale Shakspeare with a humorous glare from his cadaverous face. "And acted in all of them—and I've turned some verses



besides. And according to my wont all writ on tavern bills."

"Not another heroic poem, I pray thee, Tom!" Shakspeare said with the out-handed gesture of one fending off offence.

Before Heywood could reply, the rafters rang with the long-sustained, boisterous derision of his companions. And so, instead of answering, he kept on tranquilly writing until they had stopped. "Keep up those alarums," he threatened, "and I write an epic to-night."

"Come close to the fire, Will," Ben Jonson ordered, "and let's see how the rural air likes thee." The company resumed their places in a crescent about the blaze. Hemminge placed a stool for Shakspeare at Jonson's right. "We lack cheer!" Jonson exclaimed, first peering into the depths of the enormous tankard which he held in a colossal paw and then shaking it with a circular motion. "What ho, boy!" he called. As there was no immediate response, "Boy! Boy!" he boomed in successive roars. And when the door opened on a peaked, smirched slice of scared boy face, "Bring us on wine, boy, Canary now, of the best and plenty of it. At once! You hear? I'll cut your gizzard out before your eyes and roast it at this very fire else." As the door precipitately closed, he turned on Shakspeare an enormous visage, all rounded leathery contours from which emerged at the chin a straggle of black beard, picked with white, and above the forehead a scratch of hair, black and stiff as wire. Somewhere between the two and in the deepest folds of the leathery skin were set the mere black twinkles that were his extraordinary eyes. "Tell us of Stratford, Will. By God, bully boys, I long for green fields. The city tires and drags me. Some day, Will Shakspeare, I'll take you at your word and come to Stratford on a visit. 'Twas but yesterday Drayton and I spoke with longing of that future junket."

"Come, Ben, do!" Shakspeare entreated. "New place has rooms we use not. Come, all of you!" He smiled about the circle, now sitting on stools before the fire, their empty mugs beside them, their eyes on him. Then the smile crooked, shrank, disappeared as another consideration, more acerb, curdled it. "But talk we not of Stratford, I pray thee. It's



yon accursed country quiet I've run away from. Give me talk of London. Odds, how I've thirsted for it! What's new here? No pretty chatter of court and politics an it please you, lads! I yearn for gossip of hussies and harlots, cut-throats and cutpurses, gulls and conies."

"Would you had but come a moment since," Dick Burbage answered. "The two Toms, Dekker and Middleton, were here and full of their new comedy the *Roaring Girl*. Knew ye ever Moll Frith, Will?"

Shakspere nodded dissent. "But ever I've heard talk of her," he added.

"Well, yon twain have spent long days—and longer nights, 'tis likely—studying the ways of that fair filthy dame—their *Roaring Girl*. By Lady, Will, she's unpaired in my experience. Full of strange oaths and stranger talk. And tales! Man, she pours adventure as others pour out dullness."

"How looks she?" asked Beaumont's voice from the other end of their row. And, "Before God, Frank, we've seen the jade!" came Fletcher's comment from the same quarter. Burbage turned and crossed his legs in the direction of the query. As ever, when Burbage was present, Shakspere followed his motions. How could a man so fleshed melt movement into a grace so exquisite. Just as on the stage, though tallow-faced and thickly featured, he transformed himself into a god. And as inevitably as Shakspere watched his friend's motion, he listened for his friend's voice—that sleek, silky voice that could make thunder of a whisper and turn every woman in the pit white with the stilled passion of its love-sighing. What a Romeo he had been—the beautiful noble face of him! And then his Richard, which had turned the affrighted city madams faint; had made them forget who wrote that Richard. Acting in the same play with Burbage, Shakspere reflected whimsically, he had often acted better than he could—that voice had made him. Dick, Shakspere reflected, had had his problems too. Should he have acted or painted? And had he chosen acting—Shakspere had often pondered this—because of that old debt, or because it was easier drifting. . . .

Beaumont, on the other hand, presented always one aspect



to the world, albeit a noble and beautiful one. He was the handsomest man of them all, tall and fair, golden-bearded, with wide-opened, strangely set green eyes; statuesquely cut as to figure. No one of them really knew Francis Beaumont, except it be Fletcher; and Shakspeare had his moments when he doubted if even John knew his partner and collaborator. It was not his university education that held them off from Beaumont or him from them; for both Fletcher and Jonson had equal learning. Or his court connections, for the Mermaid circle had the imperviousness to rank which associated genius often begets. No, it was a quality of remoteness from which nothing in life or any degree of living could ever free Beaumont. . . . What had dragged Beaumont down from those mental mountain fastnesses to go to play-writing?

Fletcher was as different from Beaumont as he well might be; little, dark, tousled-looking, effeminately made; of an extraordinary silver-wittedness, mental warmth and, above all, creative fecundity. John spawned plots as he talked. It was a perfect collaboration, Shakspeare had always thought; for Beaumont supplied judgment, taste, a sense of proportion, constructive ability, workmanlike scrupulosity, and a real poetic quality. Fletcher, on the other hand, brought to their work a virgin forest of thought and idea, plot and plan. Shakspeare admired and respected Beaumont, but he had a strange mental affinity with Fletcher.

"You'd remember Moll Frith, had you seen her, John," Burbage informed Fletcher, dryly. "She's as tall as Frank and I'll not say as big, but bigger. She can hold two lads with her one hand while she murders them with the other—a fist as big as the hoof of a horse. A handsome wench besides—red-headed and yellow-eyed. Her hair comes to her heels and sometimes it pleases her to wear it in that fashion. 'Tis a blaze then, running from her head to the ground. She's fought her way, every inch, to her bawdy throne. No woman loves her, nor would dare cross her, but would give her soul to be chosen as her friend. No man crosses her, nor would dare love her, but would give his ears to be picked as her swain. She's fleeced more gulls and conies— Not at all



unlike," he added, dryly, "although their spheres be far separate, our late noble virgin majesty, Elizabeth."

"'Tis pity, Will, you saw her not first," said Hemminge.

And at that, the room filled with ribaldry. The adoring reverence, the admiring worship that poor stupid John Hemminge held for Will Shakspeare was the jest and butt of the Mermaid Club. Ben, especially at this moment, shook like a mountain of jelly. Hemminge was placidly aware of his derision and as placidly indifferent to it. He turned now his big gray eyes—save for their love as expressionless as those of a hound—upon the object of his solicitude. He was a big, bulky creature—Hemminge. Beside Beaumont he was as a farm stallion to a knight's charger. Yet on their trips through the stews of the town, it was to John Hemminge, not to Beaumont, that the Dolls and Molls and Polls shot their first lewd welcomes of glance and greeting.

"True, John!" Shakspeare applauded, dryly. "'Tis pity I saw her not first. 'Tis pity—I know you think, and I agree—that any of these poor scribblers here was ever born to take from me dramatic share of the romance and poetry that lies bound in merry England."

"Oh, Will"—Fletcher turned the talk—"hast heard of Daborne and his new children's company? More 'little eyases' to make us trouble. Of the new theatre near the Paris Gardens. . . ."

The talk went on. The smoochy waiter lad—his scared eye scuttling at Jonson's every move to Jonson's face—filled their tankards with Canary again and again and again. The big fire died down at intervals, but someone always replenished it from a pile of logs at the side. When the flames burned high, they turned the little rounds of opaque glass in the casements to files of glaring eyes; the room seemed crowded. They illuminated the farthest corner, except that one, already illumined by the flame of a candle, where twinkling Tom Heywood wrote steadily on, despite the talk—wrote steadily on even though he joined in that talk. The big plain room had an aspect of home to Shakspeare; for it had housed thousands of wine-bedewed, discussion-ridden nights whose talk had touched the stars. Every drawing on its walls



was familiar to him, every ribald couplet. And the men in it were his friends, true and tried. Not that he had not had his differences, major and minor, with them; not that he liked them equally. But no one among them but was linked in some picturesque or glorious way into the chain of his London existence. And when the blaze died down to a softer glow that failed to pick out faces, its gleam on pewter tankards, on laughter-filled eyes, companioned the room again for him. Shakspeare listened and drew them out for stories; listened and, if the talk threatened to run into one of their uproarious duels of wit, drew them out again. But that did not happen often. By sheer force of will, he made it a night of anecdote and reminiscence. There was plenty of talk. There were the latest tales of Henslowe's niggardliness—no Mermaid night was a success without a Henslowe interval. From Beaumont there were stories of the production of the *Knight of the Burning Pestle*; from Fletcher, of the handsome way Tom Heywood had helped them in their satire on him; from Ben, of the production of the *Alchemist* and of the difficulties he was having with a new play, *Cataline*—"a damned dull drama of desperation!" he described it. So dull had it become, indeed, that he had begun a new, highly contrasting one. When the talk turned to the past, Jonson spun a long yarn of the week he and Marston and Chapman spent in prison the time *Eastward Ho!* was produced. Burbage told of his acting experiences as a child—those reminiscences went as far back as *Hieronimo*—interspersed with such bits of impromptu acting as made his auditors hold their breath. . . .

As long after midnight Shakspeare turned into Montjoy house, it was with a sense of perfect calm. All his melancholies had vanished in the high, clear wind of London talk. To-morrow he would sit him down and write, write—oh, God, how he would write!

But next morning, although the day was rare and the sun poured its heartening gold over the entire London world, though quill and white paper were close at hand, though Mistress Montjoy by whispered bribes or threats held the entire household under the spell of a quietude like death



itself, write he could not. Eyes closed, mind held taut, he tried to relive last night's rapturous mood; to distill it into the day's expression. All useless! He scribbled half-lines and broken phrases, drew strange amateur pictures, thought hard with his down-bent head clutched in his hands; thought hard, pacing the room the while, thought hard, face-down upon his bed. All useless! Anything else he might accomplish. But of a certainty one thing he could not do—and that was write. It added to his sense of gloom that out of his early-morning talk with Mistress Montjoy he had gleaned a coming trouble in the Montjoy family. The old dispute in regard to their daughter Juliet, and her dowry. . . . Montjoy and his son-in-law no longer spoke; there were whispers about a suit at law. Of course, in that case, he'd be summoned as a witness. Well, he'd stand with Juliet—the pet of his long years of living with the Montjoy family. This phantom care kept coming between him and his thought. Maddened at last by his ineptness and deadness, he seized his hat and cape; sallied forth. Automatically he made toward Cheapside.

It was a fair London scene, the day clear, the wind flapping but brisk; and in other times or in another mood, Shakespeare's heart would have leaped to the colour and bustle and gaiety of it all. Cheapside was crowded with shoppers and strollers; housewives with baskets; gallants in plumes and laces; homespun gawks from the country, pop-eyed with amaze. The shops were wide, and the brilliant sun caught on diamonds and jet, on taffeta and linsey-woolsey, on silver and leather, on feathers and laces. Above, swinging vigorously in the wind, the shop-signs made a moving aërial frieze, painted in violent scenes with colours equally violent. Horsemen passed with an imperious swiftness through the crowd which edged off to give them room. Once, one of the decade's new-fangled riding-contrivances—a coach—drove leisurely, with its span of horse, into their midst. Still a rarity in that busy district, it provoked all the ridicule, ribaldry, and raucousness of which the 'prentices of Cheap were capable, notwithstanding the lovely lady inside, who, displaying a rosy indignation, hastily put on her mask. In



the midst of all this, an inquisitive fellow lolling at his work, an idle eye raking the street, got glimpse of Shakspeare. Immediately his shrill cry, "Ho, lads, 'tis Will Shakspeare! Will of the Globe! Will of the King's men!" was caught up by his fellows till all about the streets rang "Hi, Will!" and "Ho, Will!"

Shakspeare doffed his hat and waved it with his most professional—and mechanical—smile. How his heart had jumped the first time Cheap had cheered him! He had not written, on that long-ago thrilled day, a single word—but it was not from mental sterility, only from surplusage of charmed emotion. Now that chorus was as hollow to him as the beating of a child's hand on a drum. He was conscious only of the city stinks and, for the first time, of a longing for the sweet freshness of the Warwickshire air. "Hi, Will! Ho, Will!" The cry ran down the street as successive lines of shopmen took it up. Shakspeare continued mechanically to smile, gracefully to wave his hat. Presently the cheers ran down. He turned on the bridge, slowed down his brisk walk to a saunter. Now the scene, though less gay, was more beautiful. He stopped and listlessly surveyed it. The Thames—it was the brief interval between tides—stretched like a vast carpet of satin, taut except where now and then, as though insecurely fastened, it rippled in the breeze: and blue save where the sun—— His mind made little flicker at verse. "Faint, gilded pools where yet the——" And then it caught with violence on that oral snag, *gilded*, and ceased. Was ever poet haunted by a single word as he by *gilded*? A cold, stark disgust with certain crystallized habits of expression added its burden to his mood. Apathetically he continued to gaze on the scene.

Boats were gliding from shore to shore over the suave river surface, and the cries of the boatmen, "Eastward ho!" and "Westward ho!" came in a faint music to his ears. Close to the banks swans drifted. Along the north shore—flower gardens linking them softly with the river and the velvet lawns holding them rigidly apart—stretched the splendid pile of palaces which was the haughtiest element in the city's many-faceted beauty. Along the same bank, but



back of him, nondescript shops and dwellings ran to the square, geometric gray hulk of the Tower. Between them, as though offering sacred barricade against social admixture—huge as a great ship, but anchored—bulked St. Paul's. Beyond them all, made soft by the city's spire-pierced smoke, rolled vivid green hills. Across the river, the theatres and gardens, the stews and bagnios huddled together as though in a desperate effort to conceal the true quality of their entertainment. And apart from them all, wrapped in austerity, St. Mary's Overy mourned and meditated. The breeze flamed. One moment it brought strongly to his nose the odours from the palace gardens; another it carried faintly to his ears the roar of the lions in the Tower.

After a while, he moved—almost without direction—on. His professional eye, sweeping the South Bank, had noted that no flag hung out at the Globe. No performance that day. He wondered vaguely why. In the same apathy, but following his habit, he looked up as he passed off the bridge to the superstructure which topped it. Yes, his luck symbol of other days—the skull of some poor long-dead, traitorous devil which had always seemed, most amiably and encouragingly, to grin on him—still stuck to its pike.

He had thought he would continue on to the Globe, but the absence of the flag changed his mind. After a moment of indecision, he turned to the left, plunged into a maze of tiny streets. They grew broader and more residential in character as they pulled away from London Bridge. Finally, he came to a trim little common. On the daisy-specked grass, children were playing. A line of geese drew a white streak over the green as they rocked toward the watering trough in the centre. At one of the small houses, half-timbered and of a smiling domestic appearance, Shakspeare paused, knocked.

"Why, it's Master Shakspeare!" exclaimed the black-eyed, warmly hued woman who opened the door to him. And frankly she held up the bursting bloom of her lips to his kiss. "How now, Mistress Harvard," Shakspeare answered, saluting her. "How dare'st flower so in the London air? Or is it Stratford roses that still glow in thy cheek? And



how fairly you are placed!" he added, as she conducted him inside.

The room they entered was bigger than, from the outside, the house seemed able to contain. High casements were partly open to the breeze and, burning through their bulleyes, the sun had flecked the floor with its own marquetry. At one side, a bunch of spring posies filled a pewter bowl; and the bowl lay beside a big volume that nearly covered the table. Mistress Harvard drew a chair—high-backed and carved—for Shakspeare, seated herself in another, the hand of each arm clasping the dimpled elbow of its fellow. "Tell me of Stratford," she begged, her big eyes, a trifle too full for real beauty, dancing; the warm colour flooding and receding. Shakspeare conscientiously told her the news of the town. That was what interested her most, though she made perfunctory inquiries as to his work, ending with—was it a new play had brought him to London? To Shakspeare's great relief, however, she did not ask its name, nor what it was about. Adroit as he was in conversation—and he had enough instinctive sympathy and sense of humour to produce unlimited volume of even Mistress Harvard's kind—he was conscious of a feeling of relief when her husband appeared.

John Harvard was one of the few of the younger generation in Stratford with whom Shakspeare had a real mental clutch. He was a big, raw-boned man; his broad shoulders in perpetual stoop; his gray eyes always gaunt with his midnight studying. Harvard had none of the poet in him; but he was a student of an inspired order.

Shakspeare had often gone to him when, in his work, he struck snags of history, science, medicine, or the law. The big book on the table, a recent purchase which he immediately displayed to Shakspeare, was an evidence of a scholarly rather than a religious trend in him. It was that new version of the Bible, of which for months there had been so much talk. The two men drew up to the table, lost themselves in examination and discussion. "We have it not yet at Trinity," Shakspeare said.

In the meantime, Mistress Harvard slipped out of the house. When she returned she was carrying a struggling,



lusty, round-cheeked urchin whose eyes—as big and black as his mother’s—were pouring tears at being yanked untimely from his play. “’Tis young John Harvard!” Mistress Harvard interrupted the two men to announce, “and you may tell them all, Will Shakspeare, when you go back to Stratford, that you had to come to London to see a child who was born a man.”

He had called on the Harvards—Shakspeare admitted it frankly to himself—not so much for old friendship’s sake as in the hope that talk with Harvard would set those diamond-sharp creative wheels in motion. But no such phenomenon manifested itself. Their talk, enthusiastic on Harvard’s side, perfunctory on his own, had resulted in nothing—that is if you called that sudden burning desire, unexpected as it was uncontrolled, for Stratford nothing; that sudden avid itch for the country quiet, the large lusted country stars, the dew-wetted, cooling dark, the country sunshine with its flower smells and summer colouring, nothing. . . .

The game was up!

London had failed him. To-morrow he would go back to New Place.

He did not know—so long and aimlessly had he wandered the Bankside streets—how he came to arrive at the Globe. Habit, of course, he reflected, wearily. He had gone like a homing horse straight to the familiar stall. But once at the Globe, he suddenly found himself fatigued. He went in.

Ah, that was the reason the flag was not up! And, of course, now he remembered that in the course of a long droning talk from his point of view as secretary of the Globe, Hemminge had told him last night that the theatre was closed temporarily! Some unexpected repairs after the ravages of the winter storms had suddenly become necessary. A pair of carpenters—rough fellows enough—were pulling up the rotten boards in the centre under the big blue patch of open sky. At the side was a pile of fresh boards; tools. Shakspeare seated himself on a second pile of boards, surveyed with the lacklustre eyes the empty boxes,



the long stage protruding into the body of the house. The carpenters gave one look in his direction; accepted him apparently as a part of this strange theatrical world; went on with their talk. Low-voiced at first, it presently ignored him, rose to a normal tone. The sun lifted higher and higher. An agreeable wood smell emanated from the boards which made his seat. Shakspeare fell into a muse that was so without thought that it was almost without consciousness. It was as though his will, exhausted by his efforts, had dropped her hand from the wheel of creative impulse; had gone to sleep. The younger carpenter had been talking about his strange adventure for a minute or two before his words began to penetrate to Shakspeare's hearing. For that interval, vaguely soothed by his own mental quiet, Shakspeare tried not to hear him. Then one detail more acid than the rest broke into that void, roused all his sense of life to sudden ravenous sensitiveness. He listened.

"Aye, Rafe," he was saying, in answer to his companion's question; "I be sailor ever since I was lad. Aye, I was one of Sir Jarge Summers' men. Aye, I took that voyage into the new western sea. Aye, I seen and heard things thou'd not believe, man!"

Rafe was older and dry: a hollow-cheeked, dull-eyed, lantern-jawed yokel—Shakspeare knew the type well enough—full of yawning buffoonery and ribald skepticisms. "Aye, Stephen," he commented, with a burst of laughter. "Well, I know you sailormen and your tales and your lies. I mind me, my wife's brother went with Raleigh to Ginny. What he told—— We doused him well in the horse-trough one morn, and after that, his tales grew smaller."

Stephen laughed too—and not ill-naturedly. He could afford to laugh. He was a big, black-browed, thick-bodied lad with a neck like a bull's. As he tore and lifted, Shakspeare saw through his ragged shirt the swift play under the skin of muscles netted with blue and red tattoo. He had a long, sea-cleared gray gaze that now took quiet measure of his fellow. Perhaps it was the certainty that he could have thrown the skeptic over his head that made him answer mildly: "Aye. 'Tis true. Sailormen do oft make romance



where the plain truth would seem more strange." And then he followed this statement by an irritating—but beguiling—silence.

For a moment no sound fell but the splintering of planks, the hammering home of wooden nails.

"Tell thy tale, Stephen," Rafe suddenly burst out. "For aught I know, ye be the first truthful sailorman that e'er I met. Tell thy tale in peace. I'll give thee my ears."

"'Tis strange," Stephen answered. "'Tis passing strange—this tale of mine. And I ask no man to put his faith on't. Yet 'tis no lie! I give ye but God's truth and there's an end on't. We sailed from London—as good and strong a crew as e'en the queen, good Bess, God rest her soul, could e'er have wanted. Englishmen all—save one. And that one, a black-avised fellow—not blackamoor, you understand; yet hairy as an ape with a face so gnarled and strange 'twould frighten children. 'A was humped a little in the back and 'a swung in's walk. And 'a had arms so bulged with strength 'a could squeeze a man to death like a bear. Rings 'a wore in his ears, of gold, and a kerchief on's head, red and yellow, gay as a fairing and a knife in's belt as had a curving blade would carve a man's guts out at one stroke. His name was some outlandishness we ne'er could twist our tongues to . . . so called we him Cal."

"Those little twisty men be fearsome powerful in the wrestle," Rafe declared.

"We sailed with fair weather and the fair weather sailed with us. The sea—'twas as smooth as—smooth as—smooth as the top of the mug when the foam's settled. 'Twas a glad crew we were at first, too; full of japes and jests and the strange talk of land and sea all sailorfolk know. But one thing we lacked—drink. 'Twas a skipper that knew the sea and a brave trouncer of men, but a niggard of grog. The days crept by and still no grog. Came more days and still none. The men fretted and murmured. But the sun kept with us and there was no real crying out until we struck the islands——"

"What islands, Stephen?" Rafe asked.

"The Bermoothes, man. Hast not heard what Sir Jarge



Summers found? A group of little islets, some no bigger than your hand, some bigger than all London town, spread out on a sea, green and blue, like a peacock's tail. We hove to there and rested. Sir Jarge and his fellows went ashore to see if there might perchance be treasure of gold or precious stones——"

"And were there treasure?" Rafe cut in, eagerly.

"Not that I have heard. But once they'd gone, among us crew, the murmurs grew for grog. Grog we asked—grog! If not—plain beer or ale. But whene'er we asked—polite and civil though we were—plain *no* was all we got. So one night, late, this hairy man, this Cal, he steals him a firkin of wine from the ship's stores and three of us—me and him and old frosty gaffer, Trink—we three slipped over the side of the ship into a boat and rowed us to the shore."

"'Twas fair venturesome," Rafe commented.

"Venturesome. You'd say venturesome, indeed, knew ye all. But list! Over the island we went, stopping to gaze at all about us and drinking as we gazed. 'Twas passing fair, that scene; flowers like jewels and sweet-smelling shrubs; no high trees but bushes that were mountain-size and all a-bloom and birds that sang most hurtsome sweet. And the air so glad and soft. . . . We gazed and gazed, and the more we gazed, the more we drank and the more we drank, the more we gazed. . . . And then the dusk came on and still we gazed and drank. But once 'twas dark, by God, fear caught us. For lights began to come, to flash in the air, to dance; lights so thick and big and bright as though the stars had fallen, and always a-dance, here, there, everywhere."

"'Twas glowworms!" Rafe skeptically announced.

"Man, I say 'twas dancing lights; there, low on the ground; here, higher than a man's head. They sparked and went out and sparked again. We tried at first to catch one—as well try to catch and hold the sunshine. And then a great fear came across us for, on a sudden, we saw—not far off, yet so near we could have touched him—a little minnikin. . . ."

"A little minnikin? What mean ye?"



"A little man-thing, no taller than my arm. It danced before us—all wound up in white, mist-like, with shining jewel eyes and mouth that smiled, beguiling, like a maid's. And 'a beckoned! We chased it. Cal, Trink, and me, in the fairy light we chased it, over hill and brook, through briar and bush; but still we caught it not. 'Twas fairy too—it floated with unfair aid from wind and breeze. But on we ran, and on and on. And as we ran a tempest came—tempest with roaring thunder as broke my ears and such lightning as split the sky in twain, twin sheets of fire. And rain—'twas like a monster fagot pack beating us on backs and faces. And in that tempest, all the fairy lights went out; the minnikin leapt away. But fright had sucked the very guts from out us! We ran in that pouring sea till we could run no longer; fell; raised up; ran once more, staggering-like, till we all three dropped on our faces—slept, with the tide of rain pouring on us; slept till noon.

"And what came of it?" asked Rafe.

"Naught! When we woke 'twas bright blue day, the sun shining round in the sky. The minnikin—we saw it not again. But through it all, Trink holds him fast to the firkin. And when we two, Cal and me, woke chatter-toothed, 'Here's my comfort!' says Trink; and pulls long at the wine."

"And how came you back to the ship?" Rafe demanded.

"Oh, they put out from the ship a gang who searched until they found us."

"And what punishment gave they you?"

"Irons for sennight and bread and water in the hold. But Sir Jarge—too pleased he was a'd found the Bermoothes to hold his anger long—so soon on deck we came and made our voyage fair and safe to England."

"How now—did Cal and Trink mind them of that minnikin after their drink had passed?" Rafe asked, shrewdly.

"Never came we twain together without talk of it," Stephen asserted, gravely. "I see him now—the little misty wight, with eyes a-mock like elves, lips smiling, beguiling like a maid's, and wee hands beckoning. . . ."

Shakspeare arose from his seat as from a dream. He moved so quietly that Stephen and Rafe took no note of



his departure. He walked slowly at first, then swiftly across the bridge, up Cheapside to Silver and Muggle. As he neared the Montjoy house, he broke into a run. Once indoors, "What's happened to thee, Will Shakspeare?" Mistress Montjoy asked. "Thy eyes are coals; thy colour fever-high."

Shakspeare did not answer her query. "Send up paper to me, mistress," he begged. "All thou hast and then send out for more!" He ran, light as a lad, over the stairs. Once in his room, he seated himself at the table; drew a blank sheet to him. Writing swiftly, he inscribed, *A Summer's Tale*. Then he drew a line through the title; wrote

#### THE TEMPEST

Scene: A ship at sea.

A storm with thunder and lightning.



## XII

### The Letter

By W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

*Selected by RAY LONG, Hearsst's International*

Outside on the quay the sun beat fiercely. Native chauffeurs sounded their horns for the pleasure of making a noise, and a stream of motors passed up and down the crowded thoroughfare. The rickshaw boys tinkled their bells; coolies, carrying heavy bales, shouted for way; men of all colors, black Tamils, yellow Chinese, brown Malays, called to one another in raucous tones. Singapore is the meeting place of a hundred peoples. But inside the office of Messrs. Ripley Joyce & Naylor it was pleasantly cool. It was dark after the dusty glitter of the street, and agreeably quiet after its unceasing din. Mr. Joyce sat in his private room, at the table, with an electric fan turned full on him. He was leaning back, his elbows on the arms of the chair, with the tips of the outstretched fingers of one hand resting neatly against the tips of the outstretched fingers of the other. His gaze rested on the battered volumes of the Law Society Journal which stood on a long shelf opposite him. On the top of a cupboard were square boxes of japanned tin on which were painted the names of rubber companies.

There was a knock at the glass door.

"Come in."

A Chinese clerk, very neat in his white ducks, opened it.

"Mr. Crosbie is here, sir."

He spoke beautiful English, accenting each word with precision, and Mr. Joyce had often wondered at the extent



of his vocabulary. Ong Chi Seng was a Cantonese and he had taken a degree in law at the University of Hongkong. He was industrious, obliging and of exemplary character.

"Show him in," said Mr. Joyce.

He rose to shake hands with his visitor and asked him to sit down. The light fell on him as he did so. The face of Mr. Joyce remained in shadow. He was by nature a silent man and now he looked at Robert Crosbie for quite a minute without speaking. Crosbie was a big fellow well over six feet high, with broad shoulders, and muscular. He was a rubber planter, hard with the constant exercise of walking over the estate and with the tennis which was his relaxation when the day's work was over. He was deeply sunburned. His hairy hands, his feet in clumsy boots, were enormous, and Mr. Joyce found himself thinking that a blow of that great fist would easily kill the fragile Tamil. But there was no fierceness in his blue eyes; they were confiding and gentle; and his face, with its big undistinguished features, was open, frank and honest. But at this moment it bore a look of deep distress. It was drawn and haggard.

"You look as though you hadn't had much sleep the last night or two," said Mr. Joyce.

"I haven't."

Mr. Joyce noticed now the old felt hat, with its broad double brim, which Crosbie had placed on the table, and then his eyes traveled to the khaki shorts he wore, showing his red, hairy thighs, the tennis shirt open at the neck, without a tie, and the dirty khaki jacket. He looked as though he had just come in from a long tramp among the rubber trees.

"You must pull yourself together, you know. You must keep your head."

"Oh, I'm all right."

"Have you seen your wife to-day?"

"No, I'm to see her this afternoon. You know, it is a damned shame that they should have arrested her."

"I think they had to do that," Mr. Joyce answered in his level soft tone.

"I should have thought they'd let her out on bail."

"It's a very serious charge."



"It is damnable. She did what any decent woman would do in her place. Only nine women out of ten wouldn't have the pluck. Leslie's the best woman in the world. She wouldn't hurt a fly. Why, hang it all, man, I've been married to her for twelve years; do you think I don't know her? God, if I'd got hold of the man I'd have wrung his neck, I'd of killed him without a moment's hesitation. So would you."

"My dear fellow, everybody's on your side. No one has a good word to say for Hammond. We're going to get her off. I don't suppose a single member of the jury will go into the box without having already made up his mind to bring a verdict of not guilty."

"The whole thing's a farce," said Crosbie violently. "She ought never to have been arrested in the first place; and then it's terrible, after all the poor girl's gone through, to subject her to the ordeal of a trial. There's not a soul I've met since I've been in Singapore, man or woman, who hasn't told me that Leslie was absolutely justified. I think it's awful to keep her in prison all these weeks."

"The law is the law. After all, she confesses that she killed the man. It is terrible, and I'm dreadfully sorry both for you and for her."

"I don't matter two straws," interrupted Crosbie.

"But the fact remains that murder has been committed and in a civilized community a trial is inevitable."

"Is it murder to exterminate noxious vermin? She shot him as she would have shot a mad dog."

Mr. Joyce leaned back again in his chair and once more placed the tips of his ten fingers together. The little construction he formed looked like the skeleton of a roof. He was silent for a moment.

"I should be wanting in my duty as your legal adviser," he said at last, in an even voice, looking at his client with his cool, brown eyes, "if I did not tell you that there is one point which causes me just a little anxiety. If your wife had only shot Hammond once the whole thing would be absolutely plain sailing. Unfortunately she fired six times."



"Her explanation is perfectly simple. Under the circumstances anyone would have done the same."

"I dare say," said Mr. Joyce, "and of course I think the explanation is very reasonable. But it's no good closing your eyes to the fact. It's always a good plan to put yourself in another man's place, and I can't deny that if I were prosecuting for the Crown that is the point on which I would center my inquiry."

"My dear fellow, that's perfectly idiotic."

Mr. Joyce shot a sharp glance at Robert Crosbie. The shadow of a smile hovered over his shapely lips. Crosbie was a good fellow, but he could hardly be described as intelligent.

"I daresay it's of no importance," answered the lawyer; "I just thought it was a point worth mentioning. You haven't got very long to wait now, and when it's all over I recommend you to go off somewhere with your wife on a trip and forget all about it. Even though we are almost dead certain to get an acquittal; a trial of that sort is anxious work and you'll both want a rest."

For the first time Crosbie smiled and his smile strangely changed his face. You forgot his uncouthness and saw only the goodness of his soul.

"I think I shall want it more than Leslie. She's borne up wonderfully. By God, there's a plucky little woman for you."

"Yes, I've been very much struck by her self-control," said the lawyer. "I should never have guessed that she was capable of such determination."

His duties as her counsel had made it necessary for him to have a good many interviews with Mrs. Crosbie since her arrest. Though things had been made as easy as could be for her the fact remained that she was in jail awaiting her trial for murder, and it would not have been surprising if her nerves had failed her. She appeared to bear her ordeal with composure. She read a great deal, took such exercise as was possible, and by favor of the authorities worked at the pillow lace which had always formed the entertainment of her long hours of leisure. When Mr.



Joyce saw her she was neatly dressed in cool, fresh, simple frocks, her hair was carefully dressed and her nails were manicured. Her manner was collected. She was able even to jest about the little inconveniences of her position. There was something casual about the way in which she spoke of the tragedy which suggested to Mr. Joyce that only her good breeding prevented her from finding something a trifle ludicrous in a situation which was eminently serious. It surprised him, for he had never thought that she had a sense of humor.

He had known her off and on for a good many years. When she paid visits to Singapore she generally came to dine with his wife and himself, and once or twice she had passed a week-end with them at their bungalow by the sea. His wife had spent a fortnight with her on the plantation and had met Geoffrey Hammond several times. The two couples had been on friendly, if not on intimate terms, and it was on this account that Robert Crosbie had rushed down to Singapore immediately after the catastrophe and begged Mr. Joyce to take charge personally of his unhappy wife's defense.

The story she had told him the first time he saw her, she had never varied in the smallest detail. She told it as coolly then, a few hours after the tragedy, as she told it now. She told it connectedly, in a level, even voice, and her only sign of confusion was when a slight color came into her cheeks as she described one or two of its incidents. She was the last woman to whom one would have expected such a thing to happen. She was in the early thirties, a fragile creature, neither short nor tall, and graceful rather than pretty. She was thin and the bones of her hands were visible through the white skin; the veins were large and blue. Her wrists and ankles were very delicate. Her face was colorless, slightly sallow, and her lips were pale. You did not notice the color of her eyes. She had a great deal of light brown hair and it had a slight natural wave; it was the sort of hair that with a little touching up would have been very pretty, but you could not imagine that Mrs. Crosbie would



think of resorting to any such device. She was a quiet, pleasant, unassuming woman. Her manner was engaging, and if she was not very popular it was because she suffered from a certain shyness. This was comprehensible enough, for the planter's life is lonely and in her own house, with people she knew, she was in her quiet way charming. Mrs. Joyce after her fortnight's stay had told her husband that Leslie was a very agreeable hostess. There was more in her, she said, than people thought; when you came to know her you were surprised how much she had read and how entertaining she could be.

She was the last woman in the world to commit murder.

Mr. Joyce dismissed Robert Crosbie with such reassuring words as he could find and once more alone in his office turned over the pages of the brief. But it was a mechanical action, for all its details were familiar to him. The case was the sensation of the day and it was discussed in all the clubs, at all the dinner tables, up and down the Malay States from Singapore to Penang. The facts that Mrs. Crosbie gave were simple. Her husband had gone to Singapore on business and she was alone for the night. She dined by herself, late, at a quarter to nine, and after dinner sat in the drawing room working at her lace. The windows opening on to the veranda were open. There was no one in the bungalow, for the servants had retired to their own quarters at the back of the compound. She was surprised to hear a step on the gravel path in the garden, a booted step which suggested a white man rather than a native, for she had not heard a motor drive up and she could not imagine who could be coming to see her at that time of night. Some one ascended the few stairs that led up to the bungalow, walked across the veranda, and appeared at the window of the room in which she sat.

At the first moment she did not recognize the visitor. She sat with a shaded lamp and he stood with his back to the darkness.

"May I come in?" he said.

She did not even recognize the voice.

"Who is it?" she asked.



She worked with spectacles and she took them off as she spoke.

"Geoff Hammond."

"Of course. Come in and have a drink."

She rose and shook hands with him cordially. She was a little surprised to see him, for though he was a neighbor neither she nor Robert had been lately on very intimate terms with him and she had not seen him for some weeks. He was the manager of a plantation nearly twenty miles from theirs, and she wondered why he had chosen this late hour to come and see them.

"Robert's away," she said. "He had to go to Singapore for the night."

Perhaps he thought his visit called for some explanation, for he said:

"I'm sorry. I felt rather lonely to-night, so I thought I'd just come along and see how you were getting on."

"How on earth did you come? I never heard a car."

"I left it down the road. I thought you might both be in bed and asleep."

That was natural enough. The planter gets up at dawn in order to take the rollcall of the workers and soon after dinner he is glad to go to bed. Hammond's car was in point of fact found next day a quarter of a mile from the bungalow.

Since Robert was away there was no whiskey and soda in the room. Leslie did not call the boy to bring it, he was probably asleep, but fetched it herself. Her guest mixed himself a drink and filled his pipe.

Geoff Hammond had a host of friends in the colony. He was at this time in the late thirties, but had come out as a boy. He had been one of the first to volunteer on the outbreak of the war and had done very well. A wound in the knee caused him to be invalided out of the army after two years, but he had returned to the Federated Malay States with a D. S. O. and a M. C. He was one of the best billiard players in the colony. He had been a beautiful dancer and a fine lawn tennis player, but though he could no longer dance and his tennis, with a stiff knee, was not so good as



it had been, he had the gift of popularity and was universally liked. He was a tall, good-looking fellow, with attractive blue eyes and a fine head of black, curling hair. Old stagers said his only fault was that he was too fond of the girls, and after the catastrophe they shook their heads and vowed that they had always known this would get him into trouble.

He began now to talk to Leslie about the local affairs, the forthcoming races in Singapore, the price of rubber, and his chance of killing a tiger which had been lately seen in the neighborhood. She was anxious to finish the piece of lace on which she was working by a certain date, for she wanted to send it home for her mother's birthday, and so she put on her spectacles again and drew toward her chair the little table on which stood the pillow.

"I don't know whether it distresses me more to see you disfigure yourself with those great horn spectacles," he said, "than it pleases me to watch your graceful, pretty hands working away."

She was a trifle taken aback at this remark. He had never used that tone with her before. She thought the best thing was to make light of it.

"I have no pretensions to being a raving beauty, you know, and if you ask me pointblank I'm bound to tell you that I don't care if you think me plain or not."

"I don't think you're plain. I think you're pretty."

"Sweet of you," she answered ironically. "But in that case I can only think you half-witted."

He chuckled. But he rose from his chair and sat down in another by her side.

"You're not going to have the face to deny that you have the prettiest hands in the world," he said.

He made a gesture as though to take one of them. She gave him a little tap.

"Don't be an idiot. Sit down where you were before and talk sensibly, or else I shall send you home."

He did not move.

"Don't you know that I'm awfully in love with you?" he said.

She remained quite cool.



"I don't. I don't believe it for a minute, and even if it were true I don't want you to say it."

She was the more surprised at what he was saying since during the seven years she had known him he had never paid her any particular attention. When he came back from the war they had seen a good deal of one another, and once when he was ill Robert had gone over and brought him back to their bungalow in his car. He had stayed with them then for a fortnight. But their interests were dissimilar and the acquaintance had never ripened into friendship. For the last two or three years they had seen little of him. Now and then he came over to play tennis, now and then they met him at some planter's who was giving a party, but it often happened that they did not set eyes on him for a month at a time.

Now he took another whiskey and soda. Leslie wondered if he had been drinking before. There was something odd about him and it made her a trifle uneasy. She watched him help himself with disapproval.

"I wouldn't drink any more if I were you," she said good-humoredly still.

He emptied his glass and put it down.

"Do you think I'm talking to you like this because I'm drunk?" he asked abruptly.

"That is the most obvious explanation, isn't it?"

"Well, it's a lie. I've loved you ever since I first knew you. I've held my tongue as long as I could and now it's got to come out. I love you, I love you, I love you."

She rose and carefully put aside the pillow.

"Good night," she said.

"I'm not going now."

At last she began to lose her temper.

"But, you poor fool, don't you know that I've never loved anyone but Robert, and even if I didn't love Robert you're the last man I should care for?"

"What do I care? Robert's away."

"If you don't go away this minute I shall call the boys and have you thrown out."

"They're out of earshot."



She was very angry now. She made a movement as though to go on to the veranda from which the house boy would certainly hear her, but he seized her arm.

"Let me go," she cried furiously.

"Not much. I've got you now."

She opened her mouth and called, "Boy, boy," but with a quick gesture he put his hand over it. Then before she knew what he was about he had taken her in his arms and was kissing her passionately. She struggled, turning her lips away from his burning mouth.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "Leave me alone. I won't."

She grew confused about what happened then. All that had been said before she remembered accurately, but now his words assailed her ears through a mist of horror and fear. He seemed to plead for her love. He broke out into violent protestations of passion. And all the time he held her in his tempestuous embrace. He was a strong, powerful man; she was helpless, her arms were pinioned to her sides so that her struggles were ineffectual. She felt herself growing weaker, she was afraid she would faint, his hot breath on her face made her feel desperately sick. He kissed her mouth, her eyes, her cheeks, her hair. The pressure of his arms was killing her. He lifted her off her feet. She tried to kick him, but he only held her more closely. He was carrying her now. He wasn't speaking any more, but she knew that his face was pale and his eyes were hot with desire. He was taking her into the bedroom. He was no longer a civilized man, but a savage. And as he ran he stumbled against a table which was in the way. His stiff knee made him a little awkward on his feet and with the burden of the woman in his arms, he fell. In a moment she had snatched herself away from him. She ran around the sofa. He was up in a flash and flung himself toward her. There was a revolver on the desk. She was not a nervous woman, but Robert was to be away for the night and she had meant to take it into her room when she went to bed. That was why it happened to be there. She was frantic with terror now. She did not know what she was doing. She heard a report. She saw Hammond stagger. He gave



a cry. He said something, she didn't know what. He lurched out of the room on to the veranda. She was in a frenzy now, she was beside herself. She followed him out, yes, that was it. She must have followed him out, though she remembered nothing of it, she followed firing automatically, shot after shot, till the six chambers were empty. Hammond fell down on the floor of the veranda. He crumpled up into a bloody heap.

When the boys, startled by the reports, rushed up, they found her standing over Hammond with the revolver still in her hand, and Hammond lifeless. She looked at them for a moment without speaking. They stood in a frightened, huddled bunch. She let the revolver fall from her hand and without a word turned and went into the drawing room. They watched her go into her bedroom and close the door; they heard her turn the key in the lock. They dared not touch the dead body. They looked at it with terrified eyes, talking excitedly to one another in undertones. Then the head-boy collected himself; he had been with them for many years, he was Chinese and a level headed fellow. Robert had gone into Singapore on his motorcycle and the car stood in the garage. He told the chauffeur to get it out, they must go at once to the Assistant District Officer and tell him what had happened. He picked up the revolver and put it in his pocket. The A. D. O., a man called Withers, lived on the outskirts of the nearest town which was about thirty-five miles away. It took them an hour and a half to reach him. Every one was asleep and they had to rouse the boys. Presently Withers came out and they told him their errand. The head-boy showed him the revolver in proof of what he said. The A. D. O. went into his room to dress, sent for his car, and in a little while was following them back along the deserted road. The dawn was just breaking as he reached the Crosbies' bungalow. He ran up the steps of the veranda and stopped short as he saw Hammond's body lying where he had fallen. He touched his face. It was quite cold.

"Where's missy?" he asked the house-boy.

The Chinese pointed to the bedroom. Withers went to



the door and knocked. There was no answer. He knocked again.

"Mrs. Crosbie," he called.

"Who is it?"

"Withers."

There was another pause. Then the door was unlocked and slowly opened. Leslie stood before him. She had not been to bed and wore the tea-gown in which she had dined. She stood and looked silently at the A. D. O.

"Your house-boy fetched me," he said. "Hammond. What have you done?"

"He tried to rape and I shot him."

"My God! I say, you'd better come out here. You must tell me exactly what happened."

"Not now. I can't. You must give me time. Send for my husband."

Withers was a young man and he did not know exactly what to do in an emergency which was so out of the run of his duties. Leslie refused to say anything till at last Robert arrived. Then she told the two men the story from which since then, though she had repeated it over and over again, she had never in the slightest degree diverged.

The point to which Mr. Joyce recurred was the shooting. As a lawyer he was bothered that Leslie had fired not once but six times, and the examination of the dead man showed that four of the shots had been fired close to the body. One might almost have thought that when the man had fallen she had stood over him and emptied the contents of the revolver into him. She confessed that her memory, so accurate for all that had preceded, failed her here. She admitted that her mind was blank. It pointed to an uncontrollable fury; but uncontrollable fury was the last thing you would have expected from this quiet and demure woman. Mr. Joyce had known her a good many years and he had always thought her an unemotional person; during the weeks that had passed since the tragedy her composure had been amazing.

Mr. Joyce shrugged his shoulders.

"The fact is, I suppose," he said to himself, "that you can



never tell what hidden possibilities of savagery there are in the most respectable of women."

There was a knock at his door.

"Come in."

The Chinese clerk entered and closed the door behind him. He closed it gently, with deliberation, but decidedly, and advanced to the table at which Mr. Joyce was sitting.

"May I trouble you, sir, for a few words private conversation?" he said.

The elaborate accuracy with which the clerk expressed himself always faintly amused Mr. Joyce and now he smiled.

"It's no trouble, Ong," he said.

"The matter upon which I desire to speak to you, sir, is delicate and confidential."

"Fire away."

Mr. Joyce met his clerk's shrewd eyes. As usual Ong Chi Seng was dressed in the height of local fashion. He wore very shiny patent leather shoes and gay silk socks. In his black tie was a ruby and diamond pin and on the fourth finger of his left hand a Japanese pearl. From the pocket of his neat white coat protruded a gold fountain pen and a gold pencil. He wore a rolled gold wrist watch, and on the bridge of his nose invisible pince-nez. He gave a little cough.

"The matter has to do with the case R. vs. Crosbie, sir."

"Yes?"

"A circumstance has come to my knowledge, sir, which seems to me to put a different complexion on it."

"What circumstance?" Mr. Joyce demanded.

"It has come to my knowledge, sir, that there is a letter in existence from the defendant to the unfortunate victim of the tragedy."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised. In the course of the last seven years I have no doubt that Mrs. Crosbie often had occasion to write to Mr. Hammond."

Mr. Joyce had a high opinion of the clerk's intelligence and his words were devised to conceal his thought.

"That is very probable, sir. Mrs. Crosbie must have



communicated with the deceased frequently, to invite him to dine with her, for example, or to propose a tennis game. That was my first thought when the matter was brought to my notice. This letter however was written on the day of the late Mr. Hammond's death."

Mr. Joyce did not flicker an eyelash. He continued to look at Ong Chi Seng with the smile of faint amusement with which he generally talked to him.

"Who told you this?"

"The circumstances were brought to my knowledge, sir, by a friend of mine."

Mr. Joyce knew better than to insist.

"You will no doubt recall, sir, that Mrs. Crosbie has stated that until the fatal night she had had no communication with the deceased for several weeks."

"Have you got the letter?"

"No, sir."

"What are its contents?"

"My friend gave me a copy. Would you like to peruse it, sir?"

"I should."

Ong Chi Seng took from an inside pocket a bulky wallet. It was filled with papers, Singapore dollar notes, and cigarette cards. From the confusion he presently extracted a half sheet of thin note paper and placed it before Mr. Joyce. The letter read as follows :

R. will be away for the night. I absolutely must see you. I shall expect you at eleven. I am desperate and if you don't come I won't answer for the consequences. Don't drive up. L.

It was written in the copper-plate hand which the Chinese were taught at the foreign schools. The writing, so lacking in character, was oddly incongruous with the ominous words.

"What makes you think that this note was written by Mrs. Crosbie?"

"I have every confidence in the veracity of my informant, sir," replied Ong Chi Seng. "And the matter can very easily



be put to the proof. Mrs. Crosbie will no doubt be able to tell you at once whether she wrote such a letter or not."

Since the beginning of the conversation Mr. Joyce had not taken his eyes off the respectful countenance of his clerk. He wondered now if he discerned on it a faint expression of mockery.

"It is inconceivable that Mrs. Crosbie should have written such a letter," said Mr. Joyce.

"If that is your opinion, sir, the matter is of course ended. My friend spoke to me on the subject only because he thought as I was in your office you might like to know of the existence of this letter before a communication was made to the Public Prosecutor."

"Who has the original?" asked Mr. Joyce sharply.

Ong Chi Seng made no sign that he perceived in this question and its manner a change of attitude.

"You will remember, sir, no doubt, that after the death of Mr. Hammond it was discovered that he had had relations with a China-woman. The letter is at present in her possession."

That was one of the things that had turned public opinion most vehemently against Hammond. It came to be known that for several months he had had a Chinese woman living in his house.

For a moment neither of them spoke. Indeed everything had been said and each understood the other perfectly.

"I'm obliged to you, Ong. I will give the matter my consideration."

"Very good, sir. Do you wish me to make a communication to that effect to my friend?"

"I daresay it would be as well if you kept in touch with him," Mr. Joyce answered with gravity.

"Yes, sir."

The clerk noiselessly left the room, shutting the door again with deliberation, and left Mr. Joyce to his reflections. He stared at the copy, in its neat, impersonal writing, of Leslie's letter. Vague suspicions troubled him. They were so disconcerting that he made no effort to put them out of his mind. There must be a simple explanation of the letter,



and Leslie without doubt could give it at once, but, by heaven, an explanation was needed. He rose from his chair, put the letter in his pocket, and took his topee. When he went out Ong Chi Seng was busily writing at his desk.

"I'm going out for a few minutes, Ong," he said.

"Mr. George Reed is coming by appointment at twelve o'clock, sir. Where shall I say you've gone?" Mr. Joyce gave him a thin smile.

"You can say that you haven't the least idea."

But he knew perfectly that Ong Chi Seng was well aware that he was going to the jail in which Mrs. Crosbie was detained. When she was brought into the room in which he waited she held out her thin, distinguished hand, and gave him a pleasant smile. She was as ever neatly and simply dressed and her abundant, pale hair was arranged with her usual care.

"I wasn't expecting to see you this morning," she said graciously.

She might have been in her own house, and Mr. Joyce almost expected to hear her call the boy and tell him to bring the visitor a gin pahit.

"How are you?" he asked.

"I'm in the best of health, thank you." A flicker of amusement flashed across her eyes. "This is a wonderful place for a rest cure."

The attendant withdrew and they were left alone.

"Do sit down," said Leslie.

He took a chair. He did not quite know how to begin. She was so cool that it seemed almost impossible to say to her the thing he had come to say. Though she was not pretty there was something agreeable in her appearance. She had elegance, but it was the elegance of good breeding in which there was nothing of the artifice of society. You had only to look at her to know what sort of people she had and what kind of surroundings she had lived in. Her fragility gave her a singular refinement. It was impossible to associate her with the smallest idea of grossness.

"I'm looking forward to seeing Robert this afternoon," she said, in her good-humored, easy voice. (It was a pleas-



ure to hear her speak, her voice and her accent were so distinctive of her class.) Poor dear, it's been a great trial to his nerves. I'm thankful that it'll be all over in a few days."

"It's only five days now."

"I know. Each morning when I awake I say to myself, 'one less.'"

"By the way, am I right in thinking that you had had no communication whatever with Hammond for several weeks before the catastrophe?"

"I'm quite positive of that. The last time we met was at a tennis party at the MacFaddens. I don't think I said more than two words to him. They have two courts, you know, and we didn't happen to be in the same sets."

"And you hadn't written to him?"

"Oh, no."

"Are you quite certain about that?" he said.

"Oh, quite," she answered with a little smile. "There was nothing I should write to him for except to ask him to dine or to play tennis and I hadn't done either for months."

"At one time you'd been on fairly intimate terms with him. How did it happen that you had stopped asking him to anything?"

Mrs. Crosbie shrugged her thin shoulders.

"One gets tired of people. We hadn't anything very much in common. Of course when he was ill Robert and I did everything we could for him, but the last year or two he's been quite well and he was very popular. He had a good many calls on his time and there didn't seem to be any need to shower invitations upon him."

"Are you quite certain that was all?"

Mrs. Crosbie hesitated for a moment.

"Well, I may just as well tell you. It had come to our ears that he was living with a Chinese woman and Robert said he wouldn't have him in the house. I had seen her myself."

Mr. Joyce was sitting in a straight-backed armchair, resting his chin on his hand; his eyes were fixed on Leslie. Was



it his fancy that as she made this remark her black pupils were filled on a sudden, for the fraction of a second, with a dull red light? The effect was startling. Mr. Joyce shifted in his chair. He placed the tips of his ten fingers together. He spoke very slowly, choosing his words.

"I think I should tell you that there is in existence a letter in your handwriting from you to Geoff Hammond."

He watched her closely. She made no movement, nor did her face change color, but she took a noticeable time to reply.

"In the past I've often sent him little notes to ask him to something or other or to get me something when I knew he was going to Singapore."

"This letter asks him to come and see you because Robert was going to Singapore."

"That's impossible. I never did anything of the kind."

"You'd better read it for yourself."

He took it out of his pocket and handed it to her. She gave it a glance and with a smile of scorn handed it back to him.

"That's not my handwriting."

"I know. It's said to be the exact copy of the original."

She read the words now and as she read a horrible change came over her. Her colorless face grew dreadful to look at. It turned green. The flesh seemed on a sudden to fall away and her skin was tightly stretched over the bones. Her lips receded, showing her teeth, so that she had the appearance of making a grimace. She stared at Mr. Joyce with eyes that started from their sockets. He was looking now at a gibbering death's head.

"What does it mean?" she whispered.

Her mouth was so dry that she could utter no more than a hoarse sound. It was no longer a human voice.

"That is for you to say," he answered.

"I didn't write it. I swear I didn't write it."

"Be very careful what you say. If the original is in your handwriting it would be useless to deny it."

"It would be a forgery."

"It would be difficult to prove that. It would be easy to prove that it was genuine."



A shiver passed through her lean body. But great beads of sweat stood on her forehead. She took a handkerchief from her bag and wiped the palms of her hands. She looked at the letter again and she gave Mr. Joyce a sidelong look.

"It's not dated. If I had written it and forgotten all about it, it might have been written years ago. If you'll give me time I'll try and remember the circumstances."

"I noticed there was no date. If this letter were in the hands of the prosecution they would cross-examine the boys. They would soon find out whether some one took a letter to Hammond on the day of his death."

Mrs. Crosbie clasped her hands violently and swayed in her chair so that he thought she would faint.

"I swear to you that I didn't write that letter."

Mr. Joyce was silent for a little while. He took his eyes from her distraught face and looked down on the floor. He was reflecting.

"Under these circumstances we need not go into the matter further," he said slowly, at last breaking the silence. "If the possessor of this letter sees fit to place it in the hands of the prosecution you will be prepared."

His words suggested that he had nothing more to say to her, but he made no movement of departure. He waited. To himself he seemed to wait a very long time. He did not look at Leslie, but he was conscious that she sat very still and made no sound. At last it was he who spoke.

"If you have nothing more to say to me I think I'll be getting back to my office."

"What would any one who read the letter be inclined to think that it meant?" she asked then.

"He'd know that you had told a deliberate lie," answered Mr. Joyce sharply.

"When?"

"You have stated definitely that you had had no communication with Hammond for at least three months."

"The whole thing has been a terrible shock for me. The events of that horrible night have been a nightmare. It's not very strange if one detail has escaped my memory."

"It would be unfortunate when your memory has repro-



duced so exactly every particular of your interview with Hammond that you should have forgotten so important a point as that he came to the bungalow on the night of his death at your express desire."

"I hadn't forgotten. After what happened I was afraid to mention it. I thought you'd none of you believe my story if I admitted that he'd come at my invitation. I daresay it was very stupid of me. But I lost my head, and after I'd said once that I'd had no communication with Hammond I was obliged to stick to it."

By now Leslie had recovered her admirable composure. She met Mr. Joyce's appraising glance with candor. Her gentleness was very disarming.

"You will be required to explain, then, why you asked Hammond to come and see you when Robert was away for the night."

She turned her eyes full on the lawyer. He had been mistaken in thinking them insignificant; they were rather fine eyes, and unless he was mistaken they were bright now with tears. Her voice had a little break in it.

"It was a surprise I was preparing for Robert. His birthday is next month. I knew he wanted a new gun and you know, I'm dreadfully stupid about sporting things. I wanted to talk to Geoff about it. I thought I'd get him to order it for me."

"Perhaps the terms of the letter are not very clear to your recollection. Will you have another look at it?"

"No, I don't want to," she said quickly.

"Does it seem to you the sort of a letter a woman would write to a rather distant acquaintance because she wanted to consult him about buying a gun?"

"I daresay it's rather extravagant and emotional. I do express myself like that, you know. I'm quite prepared to admit it's rather silly." She smiled. "And after all, Geoff Hammond wasn't quite a distant acquaintance. When he was ill I'd nursed him like a mother. I asked him to come when Robert was away, because Robert wouldn't have him in the house."

Mr. Joyce was tired of sitting so long in the same posi-



tion. He rose and walked once or twice up and down the room, choosing the words he proposed to say; then he leaned over the back of his chair. He spoke slowly in a tone of deep gravity.

"Mrs. Crosbie I want to talk to you very, very seriously. This case was comparatively plain sailing. There was only one point which seemed to me to require explanation; as far as I could judge you had fired no less than four shots into Hammond when he was lying on the ground. It was hard to accept the possibility that a delicate, frightened, and habitually self-controlled woman, of gentle nurture and refined instincts, should have surrendered to an absolutely uncontrolled frenzy. But of course it was admissible. Although Geoffrey Hammond was much liked and on the whole thought highly of I was prepared to prove that he was the sort of man who might be guilty of the crime which in justification of your act you accused him of. The fact, which was discovered after his death, that he had been living with a Chinese woman gave us something very definite to go upon. That robbed him of any sympathy which might have been felt for him. We made up our minds to make every use of the odium which such a connection cast upon him in the minds of all respectable people. I told your husband this morning that I was certain of an acquittal, and I wasn't just telling him that to give him heart. I do not believe that the jury would have left the box."

They looked into one another's eyes. Mrs. Crosbie was strangely still. She was like a little bird paralyzed by the fascination of a snake. He went on in the same quiet tones.

"But this letter has thrown an entirely different complexion on the case. I am your legal adviser, I shall represent you in Court. I take your story as you tell it me and I shall conduct your defence according to its terms. It may be that I believe your statements and it may be that I doubt them. The duty of counsel is to persuade the jury that the evidence placed before them is not such as to justify them in bringing in a verdict of guilty, and any private opinion he may have of the innocence or guilt of his client is entirely beside the point."



He was astonished to see in Leslie's eyes the flicker of a smile.

"You're not going to deny that Hammond came to your house at your urgent, and I may even say hysterical invitation?"

Mrs. Crosbie hesitated for a moment and she seemed to consider.

"They can prove that the letter was taken to his bungalow by one of the house-boys. He rode over on his bicycle."

"You mustn't expect other people to be stupider than you. The letter will put them on the track of suspicions which have entered nobody's head. I will not tell you what I personally thought when I saw the copy. I do not wish you to tell me anything but what is needed to save your neck."

Mrs. Crosbie gave a shrill cry. She sprang to her feet, white and trembling, and her eyes were aghast with terror.

"You don't think they'd hang me?"

"If they came to the conclusion that you hadn't killed Hammond in self-defense it would be the duty of the jury to bring in a verdict of guilty. The charge is murder. It would be the duty of the judge to sentence you to death."

"But what can they prove?" she gasped.

"I don't know what they can prove. You know. I don't want to know. But if their suspicions are aroused, if they begin to make inquiries, if the natives are questioned—what is it that can be discovered?"

She crumpled up suddenly. She fell on the floor before he could catch her. She had fainted. He looked round the room for water, but there was none there, and he did not want to be disturbed. He stretched her out on the floor and kneeling beside her waited for her to recover. When she opened her eyes he was disconcerted by the terrible fear that he saw in them.

"Keep quite still," he said. "You'll be better in a moment."

"You won't let them hang me," she whispered.

She began to cry, hysterically, while in undertones he sought to quiet her.

"For goodness' sake pull yourself together," he said.



"Give me a minute."

Her courage was amazing. He could see the effort she made to regain her self-control and soon she was once more calm.

"Let me get up now."

He gave her his hand and helped her to her feet. He took her arm and led her to the chair. She sat down wearily.

"Don't talk to me for a minute or two," she said.

"Very well."

When at last she spoke it was to say something which he did not expect. She gave a little sigh.

"I'm afraid I've made rather a mess of things," she said.

He did not answer and once more there was a silence.

"Isn't it possible to get hold of the letter?" she said at last.

"I do not think anything would have been said to me about it if the person in whose possession it is was not prepared to sell it."

"Who's got it?"

"The Chinese woman who was living in Hammond's house."

A spot of color came for an instant upon Leslie's cheekbones.

"Does she want an awful lot for it?"

"I imagine that she has a very shrewd idea of its value. I doubt if it would be possible to get hold of it except for a very large sum."

"Are you going to let me be hanged?"

There was a little break in her voice which the lawyer found deeply moving. He had lived in the East a long time and his sense of professional honor was perhaps not quite so acute as it had been twenty years before. He was prepared to do a thing of which at home the possibility would never have occurred to him. But he was an honest man and because he had made up his mind to do something which he knew was unjustifiable he felt dully resentful against Leslie. She did not know what she was asking him.

"Do you think it's so simple as all that to secure possession of an unwelcome piece of evidence? It's no different from



suborning a witness. You have no right to make any such suggestion to me."

"Then what is going to happen to me?"

"Justice must take its course."

She grew very pale. A little shudder passed through her body.

"I put myself in your hands. Of course I have no right to ask you to do anything that isn't proper."

Mr. Joyce moved uneasily in his chair. He wondered what really was the explanation of that letter. It was not fair to her to conclude from it that she had killed Hammond without provocation. He stared at the floor. It embarrassed him a little to speak.

"I don't exactly know what your husband's circumstances are."

She shot a swift glance at him.

"He has a good many tin shares and a small share in two or three rubber estates. I suppose he could raise the money."

"He would have to be told what it was for."

She was silent for a moment. She seemed to think.

"He's in love with me still. He would make any sacrifice to save me. Is there any need for him to see the letter?"

Mr. Joyce frowned a little. She went on.

"Robert is an old friend of yours. I'm not asking you to do anything for me, I'm asking you to save a rather simple, kind man who never did you any harm, from all the pain that's possible."

Mr. Joyce did not reply. He rose to go and Mrs. Crosbie, with the grace which was natural to her, held out her hand. She was shaken by the scene, and her look was haggard, but she made a brave attempt to speed him with courtesy.

"It's so good of you to take all this trouble for me. I can't begin to tell you how grateful I am."

Mr. Joyce returned to his office. He sat in his own room, quite still, attempting to do no work, and pondered. His imagination brought before him many strange ideas. He shuddered a little. On a sudden there was the discreet knock on his door which he was expecting. Ong Chi Seng came in.



"I was just going out to have my chou, sir," he said.

"All right."

"I didn't know if there was anything you wanted before I went, sir."

"I don't think so. Did you make another appointment for Mr. Reed?"

"Yes, sir. He will come at three o'clock."

"Good."

Ong Chi Seng turned away, walked to the door, and put his long, slim fingers on the handle. Then, as though on an afterthought, he turned back.

"Is there anything you wish me to say to my fliend, sir?"

Although Ong Chi Seng spoke English so admirably he had still a difficulty with the letter R., and he pronounced it "fliend."

"What friend?"

"About the letter that Mrs. Crosbie wrote to Hammond deceased, sir."

"Oh! I'd forgotten about that. I mentioned it to Mrs. Crosbie and she denies having written anything of the sort. It's evidently a forgery."

Mr. Joyce took the copy from his pocket and handed it to Ong Chi Seng. Ong Chi Seng ignored the gesture.

"In that case, sir, I suppose there would be no objection if my fliend delivered the letter to the Public Prosecutor."

"None. But I don't quite see what good that would do your friend."

"My fliend, sir, thought it was his duty in the interests of justice."

"I am the last man in the world to interfere with any one who wishes to do his duty, Ong."

The eyes of the lawyer and of the Chinese clerk met. Not the shadow of a smile hovered on the lips of either, but they understood each other perfectly.

"I quite understand, sir," said Ong, "but from my study of the case R. vs. Crosbie I am of opinion that the production of such a letter would be damaging to our client."

"I have always had a very high opinion of your legal acumen, Ong Chi Seng."



"It has occurred to me, sir, that if I could persuade my friend to induce the China-woman who has the letter to deliver it into our hands it would save a great deal of trouble."

Mr. Joyce idly drew faces on his blotting paper.

"I suppose your friend is a business man. Under what circumstances do you think he would be induced to part with the letter?"

"He has not got the letter. The China-woman has the letter. He is only a relation of the China-woman. She is an ignorant woman; she did not know the value of the letter till my friend told her."

"What value did he put on it?"

"Ten thousand dollars, sir."

"Good God! Where on earth do you suppose Mrs. Crosbie can get ten thousand dollars? I tell you the letter's a forgery."

He looked up at Ong Chi Seng as he spoke. The clerk was unmoved by the outburst. He stood at the side of the desk, civil, cool, and observant.

"Mr. Crosbie owns an eighth share of the Bepong Rubber Estate and a sixth share of the Kelanton River Rubber Estate. I have a friend who will lend him the money on the security of his properties."

"You have a large circle of acquaintances, Ong."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you can tell them all to go to hell. I would never advise Mr. Crosbie to give a penny more than five thousand for a letter that can be very easily explained."

"The China-woman does not want to sell the letter, sir. My friend took a long time to persuade her. It is useless to offer her less than the sum mentioned."

Mr. Joyce looked at Ong Chi Seng for at least three minutes. The clerk bore the searching scrutiny without embarrassment. He stood in a respectful attitude with cast-down eyes. Mr. Joyce knew his man. Clever fellow, Ong, he thought, I wonder how much he's going to get out of it.

"Ten thousand dollars is a very large sum."



"Mr. Crosbie will certainly pay it rather than see his wife hanged, sir."

Again Mr. Joyce paused. What more did Ong know than he said? He must be pretty sure of his ground if he was so obviously unwilling to bargain. That sum had been fixed on because whoever it was who was managing the affair knew it was the largest sum that Robert Crosbie could raise.

"Where is the China-woman now?" asked Mr. Joyce.

"She is staying in the house of my fiend, sir."

"Will she come here?"

"I think it more better if you go to her, sir. I can take you to the house to-night and she will give you the letter. She is a very ignorant woman, sir, and she does not understand checks."

"I wasn't thinking of giving her a check. I will bring banknotes with me."

"It would only be waste of time to bring less than ten thousand dollars, sir."

"I quite understand."

"I will go and tell my fiend after I have had my chou, sir."

"Very good. You'd better meet me outside the club at ten o'clock to-night."

"With pleasure, sir," said Ong Chi Seng.

He gave Mr. Joyce a little bow and left the room. Mr. Joyce went out to have luncheon too. He went to the club and here, as he had expected, he saw Robert Crosbie. He was sitting at a crowded table, and as he passed him, looking for a place, Mr. Joyce touched him on the shoulder.

"I'd like to have a word or two with you before you go," he said.

"Right you are. Let me know when you're ready."

Mr. Joyce had made up his mind how to tackle him. He played a rubber of bridge after luncheon in order to allow time for the club to empty itself. He did not want on this particular matter to see Crosbie in his office. Presently Crosbie came into the card room and looked on till the game was finished. The other players went on their various affairs and the two were left alone.



"A rather unfortunate thing has happened, old man," said Mr. Joyce in a tone which he sought to render as casual as possible. "It appears that your wife sent a letter to Hammond asking him to come to the bungalow on the night he was killed."

"But that's impossible," cried Crosbie. "She's always stated that she had no communication with Hammond. I know from my own knowledge that she hadn't set eyes on him for a couple of months."

"The fact remains that the letter exists. It's in the possession of the Chinese woman Hammond was living with. Your wife meant to give you a present on your birthday and she wanted Hammond to help her to get it. In the emotional excitement that she suffered from after the tragedy she forgot all about it, and having once denied having any communication with Hammond she was afraid to say that she had made a mistake. It was, of course, very unfortunate, but I daresay it was not unnatural."

Crosbie did not speak. His large, red face bore an expression of complete bewilderment, and Mr. Joyce was at once relieved and exasperated by his lack of comprehension. He was a stupid man and Mr. Joyce had no patience with stupidity. But his distress since the catastrophe had touched a soft spot in the lawyer's heart; Mrs. Crosbie had struck the right note when she asked him to help her not for her sake, but for her husband's.

"I need not tell you that it would be very awkward if this letter found its way into the hands of the prosecution. Your wife has lied and she would be asked to explain the lies. It alters things a little if Hammond did not intrude, an unwanted guest, but came to your house by invitation. It would be easy to arouse in the jury a certain indecision of mind."

Mr. Joyce hesitated. He was face to face now with his decision. If it had been a time for humor he could have smiled at the reflection that he was taking so grave a step and that the man for whom he was taking it had not the smallest conception of its gravity. If he gave the matter a



thought he probably imagined that what Mr. Joyce was doing was what any lawyer did in the ordinary run of business.

"My dear Robert, you are not only my client, but my friend. I think we must get hold of that letter. It'll cost a good deal of money. Except for that I should have preferred to say nothing to you about it."

"How much?"

"Ten thousand dollars."

"That's a devil of a lot. With the slump and one thing and another it'll just about take all I've got."

"Can you get it at once?"

"I suppose so. Old Charlie Meadows will let me have it on my tin shares and on those two plantations I'm interested in."

"Then will you?"

"Is it absolutely necessary?"

"If you want you wife to be acquitted."

Crosbie grew very red. His mouth sagged strangely.

"But . . ." he could not find words. His face now was purple. "But . . . I don't understand. She can explain. You don't mean to say they'd find her guilty? They couldn't hang her for putting a noxious vermin out of the way."

"Of course they wouldn't hang her. They might only find her guilty of manslaughter. She might get off with two or three years."

Crosbie started to his feet and his red face was distraught with horror.

"Three years!"

Then something seemed to dawn in that slow intelligence of his. His mind was darkness across which shot suddenly a flash of lightning and though the succeeding darkness was as profound there remained the memory of something not seen, but perhaps just discerned. Mr. Joyce saw that Crosbie's big red hands, coarse and hard with all the odd jobs he had set them to, trembled a little.

"What was the present she wanted to make me?"

"She says she wanted to give you a new gun."

Once more that great red face flashed a deeper red.

"When have you got to have the money ready?"



There was something odd in his voice now. It sounded as though he spoke with invisible hands clutching at his throat.

"At ten o'clock to-night. I thought you could bring it to my office at about six."

"Is the woman coming to you?"

"No, I'm going to her."

"I'll bring the money. I'll come with you."

Mr. Joyce looked at him sharply.

"Do you think there's any need for you to do that? I think it would be better if you left me to deal with this matter by myself."

"It's my money, isn't it? I'm going to come."

Mr. Joyce shrugged his shoulders. They rose and shook hands. Mr. Joyce looked at him curiously.

At ten o'clock they met in the club.

"Everything all right?" asked Mr. Joyce.

"Yes, I've got the money in my pocket."

"Let's go, then."

They walked down the steps. Mr. Joyce's car was waiting for them in the square, silent at that hour, and as they came to it Ong Chi Seng stepped out of the shadow of a house. He took his seat beside the driver and gave him a direction. They drove past the Hotel de l'Europe and turned up by the Sailors' Home to get into Victoria Road. Here the Chinese shops were open still, idlers lounged about, and in the roadway rickshaws and motor cars and cabs gave a busy air to the scene. Suddenly their car stopped and Ong turned around.

"I think it is more better if we walk here, sir," he said.

They got out and he went on. They followed a step or two behind. Then he asked them to stop.

"You wait here, sir. I go in and speak to my fliend."

He went into a shop, open to the street, where three or four Chinese were standing behind the counter. It was one of those strange shops where nothing was on view and you wondered what it was they sold there. They saw him address a stout man in a duck suit with a large gold chain across his breast and the man shot a quick glance out into the street.



He gave Ong a key and Ong came out. He beckoned to the two men waiting and slid into a doorway at the side of the shop. They followed him and found themselves at the foot of a flight of stairs.

"If you wait a minute I will light a match," he said, always resourceful. "You come upstairs, please."

He held a Japanese match in front of them, but it scarcely dispelled the darkness and they groped their way up behind him. On the first floor he unlocked a door and going in lit a gas jet.

"Come in, please," he said.

It was a small square room, with one window, and the only furniture consisted of two low Chinese beds covered with matting. In one corner was a large chest, with an elaborate lock, and on this stood a shabby tray with an opium pipe on it and a lamp. There was in the room the faint, acrid scent of the drug. They sat down and Ong Chi Seng offered them cigarettes. In a moment the door was opened by the fat Chinaman whom they had seen behind the counter. He bade them good evening in very good English and sat down by the side of his fellow countryman.

"The China-woman is just coming," said Ong.

A boy from the shop brought in a tray with a tea pot and cups and the Chinaman offered them a cup of tea. Crosbie refused. The Chinese talked to one another in undertones, but Crosbie and Mr. Joyce were silent. At last there was the sound of a voice outside; some one was calling in a low tone; and the Chinaman went to the door. He opened it, spoke a few words, and ushered a woman in. Mr. Joyce looked at her. He had heard much about her since Hammond's death, but had never seen her. She was a stoutish person, not very young, with a broad, phlegmatic face; she was powdered and rouged and her eyebrows were a thin black line, but she gave you the impression of a woman of character. She wore a pale blue jacket and a white skirt, her costume was not quite European nor quite Chinese, but on her feet were little Chinese silk slippers. She wore heavy gold chains round her neck, gold bangles on her wrists, gold earrings and elaborate gold pins in her black hair. She



walked in slowly, with the air of a woman sure of herself, but with a certain heaviness of tread, and sat down on the bed beside Ong Chi Seng. He said something to her and nodding she gave an incurious glance at the two white men.

"Has she got the letter?" asked Mr. Joyce.

"Yes, sir."

Crosbie said nothing, but produced a roll of five-hundred dollar notes. He counted out twenty and handed them to Ong.

"Will you see if that is correct?"

The clerk counted them and gave them to the fat Chinaman.

"Quite correct, sir."

The Chinaman counted them once more and put them in his pocket. He spoke again to the woman and she drew from her bosom a letter. She gave it to Ong who cast his eyes over it.

"This is the right document, sir," he said, and was about to give it to Mr. Joyce when Crosbie took it from him.

"Let me look at it," he said.

Mr. Joyce watched him read and then held out his hand for it.

"You'd better let me have it."

Crosbie folded it up deliberately and put it in his pocket.

"No, I'm going to keep it myself. It's cost me enough money."

Mr. Joyce made no rejoinder. The three Chinese watched the little passage, but what they thought about it, or whether they thought, it was impossible to tell from their impassive countenances. Mr. Joyce rose to his feet.

"Do you want me any more to-night, sir?" said Ong Chi Seng.

"No." He knew that the clerk wished to stay behind in order to get his agreed share of the money, and he turned to Crosbie. "Are you ready?"

Crosbie did not answer, but stood up. The Chinaman went to the door and opened it for them. Ong found a bit of candle and lit it in order to light them down and the two Chinese accompanied them to the street. They left the



woman sitting quietly on the bed smoking a cigarette. When they reached the street the Chinese left them and went once more upstairs.

"What are you going to do with that letter?" asked Mr. Joyce.

"Keep it."

They walked to where the car was waiting for them and here Mr. Joyce offered his friend a lift. Crosbie shook his head.

"I'm going to walk." He hesitated a little and shuffled his feet. "I went to Singapore on the night of Hammond's death partly to buy a new gun that a man I knew wanted to dispose of. Good night."

He disappeared quickly into the darkness.

Mr. Joyce was quite right about the trial. The jury went into the box determined to acquit Mrs. Crosbie. She gave evidence on her own behalf. She told her story simply and with straightforwardness. The attorney general was a kindly man and it was plain that he took no great pleasure in his task. He asked the necessary questions in a deprecating manner. His speech for the prosecution might really have been a speech for the defence and the jury were not out of the box for more than five minutes. When the verdict of not guilty was given it was impossible to prevent the great outburst of applause. The judge congratulated Mrs. Crosbie and she was a free woman. It had been arranged that after the trial Mr. and Mrs. Crosbie should go to the Joyce's house. No one had expressed a more violent opinion of Hammond's behavior than Mrs. Joyce; she was a woman loyal to her friends and she had insisted on the Crosbies staying with her till they made arrangements to go away. It was out of the question for poor, dear, brave Leslie to return to the bungalow at which the horrible catastrophe had taken place.

The trial was over by half-past twelve and when they reached the Joyces' house a grand luncheon was awaiting them. Cocktails were ready—Mrs. Joyce's million dollar cocktail which was celebrated through all the Malay States—



and Mrs. Joyce drank Leslie's health. She was a talkative, vivacious woman, and now she was in the highest spirits. It was fortunate, for the rest of them were silent. She did not wonder; her husband never had much to say, and the other two were naturally exhausted from the long strain to which they had been subjected. During luncheon she carried on a bright and spirited monologue. Then coffee was served.

"Now, children," she said, in her gay, bustling fashion. "You must have a rest and after tea I shall take you both for a drive to the sea."

Mr. Joyce who lunched at home only by exception had, of course, to go back to his office.

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Mrs. Joyce," said Crosbie. "I've got to get back to the estate at once."

"Not to-day?" she cried.

"Yes, now. I've neglected it for too long and I have urgent business. But I shall be very grateful if you will keep Leslie until we have decided what to do."

Mrs. Joyce was about to expostulate, but her husband prevented her.

"If he must go, he must, and there's an end of it."

There was something in the lawyer's tone which made her look at him quickly. She held her tongue. There was a moment's silence. Then Crosbie spoke again.

"If you'll forgive me I'll start at once so that I can get there before dark." He rose from the table. "Will you come and see me off, Leslie?"

"Of course."

They went out of the dining room together.

"I think that's rather inconsiderate of him," said Mrs. Joyce. "He must know that Leslie wants to be with him just now."

"I'm sure he wouldn't go if it wasn't absolutely necessary."

"Well, I'll just see that Leslie's room is ready for her. She wants a complete rest, of course, and then amusement."

Mrs. Joyce left the room and Joyce sat down again. He lit a cigar. In a short time he heard Crosbie start the engine of his motorcycle and then noisily go over the gravel of the garden path. He got up and went to the drawing room.



Mrs. Crosbie was standing in the middle of it, looking into space, and in her hand was an open letter. He recognized it. She gave him a glance as he came in and he saw that she was deadly pale.

"He knows," she whispered.

Mr. Joyce went up to her and took the letter from her hand. He lit a match and set the paper afire. She watched it burn. When he could hold it no longer he dropped it on the tiled floor and they both looked at the paper curl and blacken. Then he trod it into ashes with his foot.

"What does he know?"

She gave him a long, long stare and into her eyes came a strange look. Was it contempt or despair? Mr. Joyce could not tell.

"He knows that Geoff was my lover."

Mr. Joyce made no movement and uttered no sound.

"He'd been my lover for years. He became my lover almost immediately after he came back from the war. We knew how careful we must be. When we became lovers I pretended I was tired of him and he seldom came to the house when Robert was there. I used to drive out to a place we knew and he met me, two or three times a week, and when Robert went to Singapore he used to come to the bungalow late, when the boys had gone for the night. We saw one another constantly, all the time, and not a soul had the smallest suspicion of it. And then lately, a year ago, he began to change. I didn't know what was the matter. I couldn't believe that he didn't care for me any more. He always denied it. I was frantic. I made him scenes. Sometimes I thought he hated me. Oh, if you knew what agonies I endured. I passed through hell. I knew he didn't want me any more and I wouldn't let him go. Misery! Misery! I loved him. I'd given him everything. He was all my life. And then I heard he was living with that Chinese woman. I couldn't believe it. I wouldn't believe it. At last I saw her, I saw her with my own eyes, walking in the village, with her gold bracelets and her necklaces, an old, fat Chinese woman. She was older than I was. Horrible! They all knew in the kampong that she was his mistress.



And when I passed her she looked at me and I knew that she knew I was his mistress, too. I sent for him. I told him I must see him. You've read the letter. I was mad to write it. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't care. I hadn't seen him for ten days. It was a lifetime.

"And when last we'd parted he took me in his arms and kissed me and told me not to worry. And he went straight from my arms to hers."

She had been speaking in a low voice, vehemently, and now she stopped and wrung her hands.

"That damned letter! We'd always been so careful. He always tore up any word I wrote to him the moment he'd read it. How was I to know that he'd leave that one? He came and I told him I knew about the China-woman. He denied it. He said it was only scandal. I was beside myself. I don't know what I said to him. Oh, I hated him then. I tore him limb from limb. I said everything I could to wound him. I insulted him. I could have spat in his face. And at last he turned on me. He told me he was sick and tired of me and wanted never to see me again. He said I bored him to death. And then he acknowledged it was true about the China-woman. He said he'd known her for years, before the war, and she was the only woman who really meant anything to him, and the rest was just pastime. And he said he was glad I knew and now at last I'd leave him alone. And then I don't know what happened; I was beside myself, I saw red. I seized the revolver and I fired. He gave a cry and I saw I'd hit him. He staggered and rushed for the veranda. I ran after him and I fired again. He fell and then I stood over him and I fired and fired till the revolver went click, click, and I knew there were no more cartridges."

At last she stopped, panting. Her face was no longer human, it was distorted with cruelty and rage and pain. You would never have thought that this quiet, refined woman was capable of such a fiendish passion. Mr. Joyce took a step backwards. He was absolutely aghast at the sight of her. It was not a face, it was a gibbering, hideous mask.



Then they heard a voice calling from another room, a loud, friendly, cheerful voice. It was Mrs. Joyce.

"Come along, Leslie darling; your room's ready. You must be dropping with sleep."

Mrs. Crosbie's features gradually composed themselves. Those passions, so clearly delineated, were smoothed away as with your hand you would smooth a crumpled paper, and in a minute the face was cool and calm and unlined. She was a trifle pale, but her lips broke into a pleasant, affable smile. She was once more the well-bred and even distinguished woman.

"I'm coming, Dorothy dear. I'm so sorry to give you so much trouble."



## XIII

### Fighting Blood

By HONORE WILLIS MORROW

*Nominated by MRS. WILLIAM BROWN MELONEY, Delineator*

It is bred in the bone of a Quaker to be non-resistant. This basic element of his faith has made the history of the Quaker one of heroic contradictions. Colonial Massachusetts passed a law specifying that the first time a Quaker preached within the confines of that liberty-loving colony, said Quaker would have his right ear amputated; on the second offense, the left ear; on the third, the tongue pierced with a red-hot iron; on the fourth, the offender would be hanged. Whereupon, as if at special invitation, the Quakers moved into Massachusetts and four of them, three men and one woman, duly were hung.

Non-resistance? Perhaps—superficially! One may suspect, though, that this form of passivity might in the long run prove to be a most potent form of warfare. Also, it seems as if one must be born with the temperament which will permit one to be a Quaker. They are an admirable people; slow to anger, patient, far-seeing, benevolent beyond the common understanding. But they must be born; they cannot be made. That is why they are so comparatively few in number.

One would have thought that Ruth Seymour possessed all the attributes required of a Quaker missionary to the Indians. She was twenty-six—deliberate, thoughtful, with the gentleness that so often accompanies great physical strength. She looked like a Murillo Madonna, if Murillo had ever painted an Anglo-Saxon Madonna.



The members of the committee of Quakers who not long ago began to turn their giving hands a little less often to reconstruction in France and rather more often toward their hereditary charity, the American Indian, felt that Ruth was the perfect choice for going to the aid of the trachoma-ridden remnant of the Deerfoot tribe of Wyoming. They had known Ruth since her birth and her Quaker father before her. He had been a man of saintlike sweetness of character. Ruth, too, was saintlike.

The members were not wrong in their judgment of her, and yet they were not wholly right. For they neglected to consider Ruth's mother, who had died at Ruth's birth. This mother had been the daughter of an Indian-fighter, one of Crook's scouts, who had fringed his belt with Apache scalps. And a fighting strain in the blood can be counted on to make trouble at least once in a lifetime.

So, after a decent rest from her labors in France, Ruth went into the northern Rockies, into Deerfoot country. Of that going, of that arrival at the Deerfoot reservation, with its five hundred miserable Indians scattered through the forests, Indians half-blind with trachoma, eaten by tuberculosis and venereal disease, we will not pause to tell. Yet it had its dramatic side, for the Indian agent did not like Quakers. He was afraid of them.

Nor, is it necessary to tell of the ranching country adjacent to the reservation, with its post-office and tavern set against the purple wall of a cañon down which dropped a waterfall—dropped in a thousand violet tints into a lake of still, black waters where a hundred thousand salmon trout wove back and forth like silver threads. Yet the women who lived in the tavern were important, because they held Ruth in contempt. They interpreted her Quaker meekness as stupidity, her Quaker pacifism as cowardice.

All these quiet facts contributed to making gaunt drama in a setting of gigantic beauty: mountains whose sheer violet flanks dwarfed to flea dimensions the emotions of the humans who homesteaded them; forests of heaven-kissing blue spruce; lakes of measureless black depths set in cañons of unthinkable heights—a thousand nuances of beauty and of



beastliness that for a year drove Ruth more and more into loneliness, culminating at last in a single day that epitomized all the three hundred and sixty-five days before.

At midnight a coyote pack had found a maverick steer near the spring above Ruth's cabin. Their yelping ceased only with the dawn, and the stillness awakened Ruth. She lay for a time staring at the kitchen stove as it slowly emerged from the darkness. When she could distinguish the kettle, waiting cold on the front lid, she slid from under the blankets, pulled a sheepskin mackinaw over her woolen nightdress and built the fire. Then she dressed herself. She was deliberate in all her movements and very sure of them. When she put up her hair, she wrapped the wide brown braids around her head with slow, sure grace, never shifting the position of a hairpin once she had thrust it into place. When, in gray blouse and skirt, she opened the door to throw out her wash water, she seemed to fling out the water and to hang the basin on the nail beside the door with a single wide sweep of her arm. Then she stood staring.

Her little house was located three miles up from the town on a shoulder of the mountain whose south side was clothed by the forests of the Indian reserve. The gray log cabin was not two hundred feet from the green edge of the woods. As Ruth hung the basin on its nail, a figure that might have been a coyote dragging a pelt crept from an aisle of columnar pines into the pink, flushed snow of Ruth's clearing. Ruth started on a slow run from the door up the snow-packed trail toward the crawling figure.

It was an old squaw on all fours. She was emaciated and hideously wrinkled, and bronze brown against the rose drifts. She had tied pelts, coyote, rabbit, lynx cat, wolverine, as best she could about her nakedness, yet patches of brown parchment skin on back and breast and skeleton thigh lay open to the zero wind that swept through the trees behind her. She was, quite incidentally, a ward of that nation which has volunteered to undertake the moral leadership of the world. "Susy!" cried Ruth. "Are you hurt?"

The squaw raised great black eyes—bloodshot, cavernous



eyes with race tragedy in their depths—to Ruth's eyes of Anglo-Saxon blue.

"Hungry!" she croaked. "Cold!"

Ruth stooped and with little apparent effort lifted the squaw to her feet and so, half-carrying her, brought her into the gray cabin. She wrapped a red blanket about her shivering old body and seated her in a chair close to the glowing stove. She heated some rabbit stew and fed it to the ravenous old woman, then stood smiling as Susy's trembling lessened.

"How is your husband, Susy?" she asked.

"Old Tom in trouble," replied the squaw.

"Are his eyes bad again, or is he more nearly starved than you are?"

Susy shook her gray head. "He in trouble about raisin-jack."

Ruth touched the old woman's shoulder with a tender hand. "Tell me about it," she urged.

Susy held her palsied hands to the fire. "Gertrude Topping and her mother make raisin-jack in cellar of tavern all Winter. You know?"

Ruth shook her head. But she did not show surprise. In the log tavern which was set like a gray lichen against the entrancing beauty of the violet cañon wall, Mrs. Topping and her daughter debauched the bodies and souls of the men of the valley.

Susy went on: "Jim Acton, Gertrude Topping want him carry raisin-jack out to railroad on mail stage. Jim Acton, he won't. He make Old Tom do it."

"Are you sure, Susy? Jim Acton was a brave soldier in France. He owns a big ranch here. Why should he make Old Tom do that?"

The squaw answered with a simple sort of conviction. "Because when Gertrude Topping get white man in tavern, she make him do anything. Mail stage always have stay all night at tavern."

Ruth slowly flushed. "But Jim Acton, Susy. He's not like the rest of them."

Susy smiled like an old sibyl. "Jim Acton is man. It



## 316 *The World's Best Short Stories of 1925*

heap lonely in this valley. He like all men, Injun or white."

Ruth looked from Susy out the window where a mighty snow-clad peak flared in liquid red against the deep-blue sky. Her splendid body was not tired, but her soul was weary to its very depths. Disillusionment grows no easier with the years.

Ruth clenched and unclenched her strong fingers, then turned back to Susy. "And how did he handle Old Tom, Susy? I thought the Indians were afraid to run raisin-jack."

"Jim Acton tell Old Tom he have to. You know Jim Acton: everybody do what he say. Old Tom, he starving, like me. After he tell Jim Acton he run raisin-jack, Jim Acton give him bellyful of beef. Keep him full of beef all time he run raisin-jack."

"Why didn't Old Tom share with you?"

"Oh, he not come to cabin many weeks," explained Susy. "Me, I live on fish till ice gets so thick, so cold, so far no can do. Yesterday word come Old Tom in trouble. Me, I come to you. Quaker friend of Deerfoot."

"What is the trouble, Susy?"—very patiently.

Susy, her eyes holding the depths of those black waters whose fish had failed her, warmed her hands in silence before she went on.

"Susy work for you last Summer. She see your eyes when Jim Acton go by. You make Jim Acton save Old Tom."

The brilliant color in Ruth's Madonna face turned to white. She stared at the old sibyl in consternation.

Susy nodded. "Jim Acton and you not know you love. But Susy know all about love. Gertrude Topping, she get him. Quaker woman afraid to love."

"Susy"—very slowly—"I'm not afraid of anything in the world."

"Afraid to love," insisted the Indian woman. "Afraid to go get man. All there is for women, love. Only get that when young. You better hurry."

There was silence in the cabin. The sun suddenly blinded Ruth's eyes with a glory that blotted out the old woman.



Destiny, which youth refuses to acknowledge, destiny which Ruth's iron will and Quaker training never had considered, destiny, crossed with heredity, is as ruthless to our purposes as the German march across Belgium. In the face of its onslaught, our little house of hopes, builded on character and habit, goes down in dust.

A dog baying hot on the scent broke the silence. A moment later there was a bark at the door. Ruth locked the door and then opened the window. A brown-and-white beagle hound growled at her and wagged his tail, but before Ruth could speak to him a man on a blue roan galloped down the narrow trail from the pines. He drew up before the window, his horse steaming in the intense cold. He was about thirty, with a clean-cut, aquiline face and clear gray eyes.

"Hello, Ruth! Is Old Tom's Susy in here?"

"Yes, Jim. What do you want of her?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe her whole doggone scalp. Let me talk to her."

"If I let you in, will you promise not to do anything to her without my consent?"

Jim dismounted. He was tall and slender, a soldierly looking man even in his sheep-lined mackinaw. "I'll promise nothing. Let me in, Ruth; this is serious."

Ruth, serene face lovely in the morning light, did not move toward the door. "I was afraid it might be. You must promise me."

Jim dropped the reins over the blue roan's head and with a movement of startling rapidity vaulted through the window into the room. "Just to save a Quaker argument," he said. "Hello, Susy! Where is Old Tom?"

The Indian woman did not lift her starved old face. Ruth closed the window and came over to stand by the squaw. "Just what has happened, Jim? I know you and the Toppings are in trouble about raisin-jack."

Jim gave her a keen glance. "Will you keep your knowledge to yourself?"



"I can't promise blindly, Jim. But you know that Susy can tell me what you won't. And I might help you."

Jim nodded. "Old Tom got held up by a revenue man, gave up a lot of whisky and beat it. I want to get to him before the revenue man does. He's a crook, Carter Smith, and mean to handle."

"Old Tom was working for you, wasn't he, Jim?" Ruth looked at the tall rancher with eyes as pellucid as the sky that now gleamed sapphire through the window.

Jim returned the look. His face was tense. "Certainly he was working for me. But he'd agreed not to say so."

"Old Tom not really work for you," the Indian woman broke in. "He work for Gertrude Topping. She pay him. Why you friend to her when you know Ruth Seymour?"

"Susy, be quiet!" Ruth's voice was unembarrassed. "Jim, if you had only stuck to the ranch this Winter—though no one admires more than I what you've done in showing this footless valley that the mail route could be kept open——"

Jim's voice was impatient. "Did you have anything to do with getting the revenue man in here, Ruth?"

"No! My business is with the Indians!"

Jim grinned. It was a boyish grin, despite the anxiety in his gray eyes. "Why didn't you keep Old Tom out of trouble, then?"

"What chance would I have had against you and Gertrude Topping?" For the first time Ruth's voice suggested pain.

Jim Acton eyed her wonderingly, as if the pain touched some unfamiliar chord within himself.

The old squaw cackled. "Gertrude Topping, she couldn't have Jim Acton easy if Quaker would fight! Huh! If Quaker was Injun woman——"

"Wait a moment, Susy!" protested Ruth. "Let's get back to Old Tom."

The impatience and anxiety in Jim Acton's face gave way to eager interest.

"Let Susy have her say, Ruth! What makes you think the Quaker woman ought to fight, Susy?"

"Don't listen to her foolishness, Jim!"



"I'm not sure it is foolishness! You'd have a lot more influence in this valley, Ruth, if the folks thought you'd fight."

Ruth looked at him sadly. How could she talk against force to this man who had given his body to his country's uses in the Great War? She believed her faith to be right, and yet——

"Let's keep to Old Tom," she insisted. "What will you do to him when you find him?"

Jim's voice became grim. "I'll see to it that he keeps his mouth shut!"

Ruth's color deepened. "But—but that's the sort of thing a man doesn't do!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean the white man's attitude toward the Indians. Your attitude toward Old Tom is typical. It's disgusting. It's like Kipling says: the thing no man can do."

The man's eyes flashed. "I'd knock a fellow down who said as much as you have to me!"

"I'm telling you the truth, Jim. You are on the wrong track in every way. It's bad for a man in government employ to wink at breaking the law, but it's worse for a man who has won the *Croix de Guerre* to force another man to take punishment for him!"

A slow burning red crept from Jim's throat to his eyes. But before he could speak, the thud of hoofs again sounded without, the beagle uttered a silvery note and Ruth opened the door. A very pretty girl in a beaver coat and cap trotted up on a bay mare.

"Hello, Ruth Seymour! Is Jim Acton here?"

"Yes, Gertrude. Will you come in?"

"I sure will!" The girl slid quietly from the uneasy horse, pulled the reins over his head and entered the cabin. She was smaller than Ruth, with beautiful brown eyes and drooping red lips. She gave old Susy a glance of contempt and turned to Jim Acton.

"Have you located Old Tom?"

Jim, looking from one woman to the other, shook his head.



"Shucks!" Gertrude turned to the squaw. "Where is Old Tom, Susy?"

Susy's eyes were blank. She gave an Indian grunt and pulled the red blanket over her naked shoulder with an insolent modesty. Ruth, standing beside the squaw, smiled as if something amused her.

Anger twisted Gertrude's red lips. "I suppose you're saving this lousy Indian's soul, Ruth, and incidentally helping Old Tom to get away. Let me warn you, if that's your racket, you are a bigger fool than usual, because I'll run you out of the valley for it. Or rather, I'll get the Indian agent to. Jim, Carter Smith is at the tavern. I think mother can fix him, but you never can tell about a crook. You've got to find Old Tom!"

"I'll have a talk with Carter Smith myself. Ruth, can you hold Susy till I get back?"

Ruth shrugged her shoulders.

"I'll stay on the job here while you're gone," volunteered Gertrude.

"No, you won't," Ruth's voice held an unexpected edge. "You'll go when Jim does."

"You haven't the nerve to make me!" Gertrude tossed her head. "Try it on!"

Ruth walked over to the door and opened it, then stood waiting. She looked very tall and very handsome. Jim strode through the door and to his horse. Gertrude tossed her head again and caught Ruth's glance, but there was something curiously and amazingly cold in that glance, and Gertrude could not hold it. She twisted her mouth to an expression of high disdain and marched out of the door, the very flip of her coat expressing contempt. Jim was sitting his horse, watching the pantomime with interest, but he said nothing. Gertrude scrambled aboard the bay mare and set off down the valley, Jim following in behind her.

Ruth closed the door. She and Susy stared at each other.

"How'd Susy tell you?" grunted the squaw. "Quaker woman won't fight for her buck!"



There was sudden naked desolation in Ruth's voice. "He's not mine, Susy."

The squaw hissed disparagingly. "Any man belong to woman that go after him. You take him, he be good white man; you no take him, Gertrude Topping make him bad man."

Ruth paced up and down beside the stove. "He's weak—weak! Father in heaven, that I should come to this!"

The old face lifted with patient tragedy that exceeded the younger woman's. "He like all men. You go fight for him. Save him. Then he save Old Tom."

Ruth pressed her knuckles against her lips. She knew how to be patient; she did not know how to burst the bonds of her patience, to express the wild longing that somewhere surged within her. She knew how to serve others to the last ounce of her great strength; she did not know how to serve that despairing, hungry self that lay deep hidden beneath her daily consciousness. She knew how to give of herself—devotion, loyalty, pain, love; she did not know how to take that for which every race desire within her soul pleaded. So do habit and character forge our containing bonds.

After a time she paused beside the squaw. "At least they shall not sacrifice Old Tom. Where is he, Susy?"

The old woman's eyes flared. "You know spring where you and Susy make camp last Summer? You know cave up back of spring by lone cedar? Old Tom, he keep traps there. He there."

Ruth nodded and began to pull a pair of arctics over her high laced boots. "You stay here, Susy. Eat all you want."

"Maybe stay; maybe better go," replied the squaw.

Again Ruth nodded and buttoned her sheep-lined coat high above her ears. Then she went to the corral for her horse. It was stiff work saddling in the bitter cold, but she managed cleverly enough and shortly she was trotting up the trail into the forest reserve. There was a deer trail in the snow, widened by coyote tracks that led for several miles along a brook. Ruth followed this through the trees—blue spruce against blue snow, with glimpses of a bluer sky—



until the stream turned abruptly south. Then she spurred her horse on westward through trackless drifts. She and Susy had blazed the trees the Summer before.

By noon she had worked up into a narrow valley, belly-deep to the horse in snow. Here, for the first time since leaving the cabin, she glimpsed the colossal peaks to the north. Snow spirals were twisting upward from their crests to form tissuelike clouds that sailed toward the sun. High on either side of the narrow valley rose the spruce-clad slopes of the reserve, line on line of black trunks, endless marching regiments of trees.

She had traveled perhaps two miles up the valley when the horse slipped on ice beneath the snow. She turned him abruptly to the right and urged him up the slope. As she gave a last glance at the peaks before she plunged among the trees, she saw that the snow clouds had reached the sun and veiled it. The trees were very thick here and there was less snow beneath the mighty wing sweep of the spruce.

The slope became acute. The horse's shoulders were quivering with fatigue when Ruth tied him and crept upward alone. The twisted bronze roots of the spruce now buttressed the mountainside, and Ruth made her way from one to another above until the sound of water beneath ice brought her to pause on a ledgelike projection beneath a dead spruce. Green ice like crystal lava spread in soft curves from the spruce roots downward until it lost itself in the dappled green shadows below. The gentle murmur of water boiling up through sand mingled with the tinkle of water dripping beneath ice.

Ruth perched on a root to rest before the final spurt to the cave. As she paused thus, a chain clanked faintly. The sound came from among the trees beyond the spring. After a moment Ruth followed the sound. Some distance on, among the roots, lay the skeleton carcass of a steer. Here Old Tom had set several traps and three of them had been sprung. The chain clanked again, and Ruth gasped with amazement. A lynx cat, a brown-and-yellow shadow, leaped and fell back with a snarl, paws across the body of another



cat, which lay quiescent, yellow eyes burning. As the first cat fell back, a coyote, a tawny gray shadow, crept from the haunches of the skeleton steer toward the recumbent lynx. The first cat, hind leg stretched back taut by a steel trap chained to a stake beneath the skeleton head, struck venomously at the creeping coyote with alternate forepaws and the coyote fell back to the limit of a trap chain attached to its leg.

Ruth moved closer. The fighting cat was a female. The injured cat for which she fought, held round the fore shoulder by a huge steel trap, was a male. He showed no sign of life save his flaming eyes. The battle must have raged for many hours. There were ruts in the ground worn by the chains of the combatants. As regularly as the rise and break of a wave, the lynx cat jumped, drove the coyote back and was brought down in midspring by the steel jaw clasp ing her mangled leg. . . . The remote tinkle of water beneath ice. The Druidic sighing of the spruce-trees. The snarl and whimper, the clank of chains. An epic fight. It seemed as perpetual a thing as the dripping of the water.

Suddenly Ruth spoke aloud and slowly. "I don't believe it! If I did, I'd have to believe in destiny, and I don't."

The exhausted forest brutes did not heed her voice. As she spoke, the coyote was creeping forward. The lynx cat sprang. But this time the chain twisted around her injured foot and shortened her reach. The coyote thrust his teeth into the male cat's shoulder. With a savage cry, the female turned and with unbelievable viciousness and rapidity bit at her broken and lacerated leg above the trap until she had severed it. Then, screaming, she gave a gigantic spring that landed her fair on the head of the coyote. They rolled together in final combat. A moment of this and the coyote collapsed limply at his chain length, quivered and was still. The lynx went back and began feebly to lick the shoulder wound of her mate. He twisted his head so that his burning eyes rested gratefully, Ruth could have sworn, upon her bloody head. A buzzard settled slowly down through the trees.

"You did save him!" exclaimed Ruth. "But at what a



price! What a price!" Then, with horror in her blue eyes, she crept upward again from root to root to the lone cedar. Behind the cedar she crawled to the top of a huge heap of orange-tinted rocks, and around an unsuspecting-looking boulder that shielded from view a shallow cave. Here an Indian in a red plaid mackinaw lay beside a dying fire.

"Old Tom!" cried Ruth. "What's happened?"

His head moved feebly. A rude bandage around his thigh was blood-saturated. His trouser leg was blood-drenched. Ruth knelt beside him, lifting his grizzled and hideous bronze head tenderly on her arm.

After a moment of stupendous effort he focused his black eyes on her face. "Revenue man—shoot me. I dug bullet out this morning. Made bleed—too——"

Ruth waited a moment. But the wandering gaze could not return. "Why did he do it, Old Tom?"

The old Indian lifted eyes heavy with death film, but could not find Ruth's face. "I not stop running away when he tell me to——"

Old Tom shivered violently, groaned and lay dead on Ruth's arm.

She laid him down beside the ashes and stood looking at him. For a long time she stood in the bitter cold of the cave, her face bowed over the silent Indian, and when at last she lifted her head her eyes were burning with an intensity that no Quaker eyes ought to reveal. She straightened Old Tom's body, then left the cave and with her beautiful deliberate sureness of movement she blocked the entrance with small boulders.

It was mid-afternoon when she finished this task and began her descent. The wind was tossing the great sails of the spruce-trees. Snowflakes, hard and grayish, cut through as the branches lifted. Ruth avoided the scene of the fight by working to the right of the spring. She reached her neighing horse in record time and guided him out into the uproar of the snow-storm.

From the foot of the narrow valley there was a trail around the shoulder of a mountain that dropped gradually



into Deerfoot Valley. In the Winter it was used only by stray steers and coyotes. When she had spurred the horse to the spot where she believed she should pick up this trail, Ruth wove back and forth, her head low to the gray's neck as she peered at the ground through the driving snow pellets. She gave a little cry of relief when at last she discerned a depression leading spiral-like into the murk of the storm.

For much of the distance the way was in the teeth of the wind. The horse sought again and again to turn tail, but Ruth for the first time since she had owned him dug the rowels deep. She could not hold the reins. She thrust her hands into the breast of her coat and guided the gray with the spurs.

It was eight o'clock when she opened the door of the stable at the tavern and led her horse in. She cared for him, then crossed the corral, fumbled open the door of the tavern, painfully crossed the threshold, closed the door and stood leaning against it. Her clothing was, literally, packed with snow.

The Toppings, mother and daughter, were seated at a poker game with Jim Acton and a small grizzled man.

"Ruth!" Jim cried. "Where on earth have you been? Here, let me take off your coat!"

Ruth waved him aside. "I'm all right if you can get me some hot coffee."

She sank into a chair, shivering, her burning eyes strange in her gentle face.

For a moment there was no sound save the rush of the great wind and the hushed roar of the waterfall beyond the corral. Jim seized a cup, filled it with coal-black fluid from the coffee-pot simmering on the office heater, and held it to Ruth's lips. When she had drained it, she was able to hold the second cup for herself, and Jim Acton repeated his question.

"Where have you been?"

Ruth finished the coffee, took off her coat and dropped it over a chair before she replied.

"I went to look for Old Tom. I found him. He was



dying from a bullet wound in the thigh. He told me the revenue man shot him because he was running away."

"I'm the revenue man," said the grizzled stranger. "He's a dirty liar, that Injun."

"I have the bullet," Ruth looked at Carter Smith out of wind-blurred eyes. "Old Tom had dug it out and had it in his fist."

"A Quaker making trouble!" sneered Gertrude Topping. "You haven't the guts!"

"I'm not a Quaker for the moment. I—I am—I am the female of the species!"

Something in the deliberation of Ruth's tone, or in the fire of her blood-shot eyes, caused the four about the table to look at one another questioningly.

Ruth went on slowly. "The Quakers are looking for this sort of evidence in regard to the Deerfoot Indian. The new Congressman from Wyoming is looking for something on the revenue men in this State. There are many——"

Jim Acton broke in. "In other words, you are in a position to sacrifice us all!"

"Yes, I am!"

"Well," said Jim thoughtfully, "I guess we've got it coming to us."

"What's the idea, Jim, you fool?" demanded Gertrude.

"Cut that, Gertrude!" Jim glanced at her, then turned back to Ruth. "What next, Ruth?"

"I'm going to make you an offer. I'll keep my mouth shut, if you will give up the Toppings and go back to your ranch."

"You mean"—Gertrude half-rose from her chair—"that I'm to turn Jim over to you, you pussy-foot Quaker, you——"

"Dry up, you!" roared the revenue man. "What do you care what the price is as long as we get out of this mess?"

Gertrude came full to her feet. "Care? Care? I'll show you what I care! I'll run this Quaker out of the valley now, like I've been waiting to for a year!"

Jim looked at the girl with a curious little smile. "Gertrude, you're through."



"Through, am I?" Something in Jim Acton's voice robbed Gertrude of her last shred of self-control. She jerked open the table drawer, pulled out a six-shooter and had fired at Ruth before the revenue man, quick as he was, could seize her wrist. He dropped the gun into his pocket and stood holding one of Gertrude's arms while Mrs. Topping, sobbing hysterically, clung to the other.

Jim ran to Ruth. "Where did she get you? Take your hand away, Ruth!"

She lifted her hand from her left elbow and a red stain spread slowly over the gray sleeve of her flannel blouse.

"I didn't think she hated me that much," said Ruth.

"I'll show you more in a minute!" Gertrude twisted against her captors. "You'll think a wolverine——"

"Keep her quiet, Carter," ordered Jim. "Ruth, you'll have to let me cut away that sleeve for you."

As he spoke he opened his knife and slit the flannel deftly, exposing the fine rounded biceps to the shoulder. The bullet had ploughed through the flesh of the upper arm.

The day had been too heavy even for Ruth's great strength and she fainted quietly as she sat, her Madonna face against Jim's belt. He looked down at her for a long moment without stirring, and a tenderness she never before had drawn from him shone in his gray eyes. Then he slipped his hand under her right shoulder and, supporting her so, looked at the group beside the table.

"It looks to me," he said, "as if the trail forked right here!"

"Will she keep her word?" exclaimed the revenue man.

Jim looked down at the brown head under his breast. "You can trust a Quaker," he said quietly.

"You dirty coward!" half-whispered Gertrude.

Jim's eyes flashed. "You little fool! I'm quitting for *her*!"

Gertrude tried again to twist away from the detaining hands. "Oh, it's that, is it! And I'm to be left to cover trail. I'll ruin you for this, Jim Acton!"

Slowly Ruth raised her head and slowly got to her feet.



She was deadly pale, her eyes blue fire, her bare arm, blood-smearred, hanging limply at her side. She crossed the room with a deliberation that was appalling and paused in front of Gertrude, who backed away. Ruth followed her until Gertrude was pressed against the log wall, her brown gaze fixed in fear on those flaming blue eyes.

When Ruth finally spoke, it was with a passion that startled her hearers. This was no Quaker voice or words.

"Do you suppose I've done this lightly? I'm party to a crime! I've cut off my conscience. I've taken a lifelong burden on my soul. Do you think I'll let you destroy the brand I've snatched from the burning by this sacrifice? You are going to keep silence—and begin to live decently—here in this valley where I can watch you—as long as we both live. Do you understand me?"

She took another step toward Gertrude, who shrieked in terror. "Get away from me, you fiend! Yes! Yes! I'll do as you say!"

Mrs. Topping suddenly caught fire at the sight of her daughter's fear. "I'll get you run out of this valley!" she shouted.

"No, you won't, old top!" Jim suddenly crossed the room. "Come, Ruth, I'll take you up to your cabin."

Ruth neither heard nor saw him. Gentleness turned to wrath in a very consuming agony. She bent her tall head toward Gertrude, who cried, "Take her away! She's gone loco! She's a fiend!"

Jim took Ruth's right hand. "Come, girl, you're going home. Your work here is done."

Ruth glanced at him. "Does she understand, this woman? Does she realize that I could tear her limb from limb—that I'd *like* to?"

"Yes! Yes! I tell you she's a fiend!" Gertrude began to slide downward to the floor.

"Ruth," urged Jim, "you must help me to get away from this place."

Ruth stared at him. "I'm angry," she insisted. "All the anger of all the Quakers is in me. This woman must leave you alone!"



Gertrude was sobbing now. "God! I'm only too anxious to leave him alone! Get her out of here."

"Ruth!" Jim tried again. "Aren't you going to let me take care of you?"

Ruth swayed slightly, looking down at her fingers held in his warm clasp. Then her eyes suffused with tears.

"You *want* to take care of me—the Quaker—Jim?"

"Yes." Jim put his arm around her. "Come over to the chair and let me bandage that arm."

Slowly, she obeyed him. Carter Smith came forward to help. Jim waved him away sharply. "Don't touch her. Go out and hitch the mules to the buckboard. Mrs. Topping, bring me towels."

He bandaged Ruth deftly. No one spoke during the process. Gertrude sobbed softly against the wall. When the revenue man put his head in at the door with word that the team was ready, Jim buttoned Ruth's coat, pulled on his great wolfskin ulster and led her out to the buckboard.

It was a wild night and a wild ride. They did not talk. Ruth was too greatly spent, and the team demanded all of Jim's attention, for the mules were only half-broken. They were afraid of the depth of the snow. They lunged and kicked, and Jim plied the whip. The wind, huge as the Rockies, enwrapped them, engulfed them. They crawled on and on, up the long way that ended at last against the corral fence.

Jim tied the mules and lifted Ruth out, guiding her staggering steps to the door. Within it was dark and cold. Jim lighted the lamp and Ruth dropped trembling to the edge of the bed. Old Susy was gone. Jim kindled the fire and set the stew-pot to heat. Finally he held a bowl of steaming liquid to Ruth's lips. When she had drunk it, he said:

"I'll go out and put up the mules. You'd better lie down."

She nodded; but when he returned, she had not stirred. He hung up his coat and cap, replenished the fire and came over to stand in front of her.

"You don't think I'll accept the sacrifice, do you, Ruth—let you carry that burden on your soul? No! The point is—" he hesitated as she lifted her tired eyes to his—"the



point is that you've waked me out of my trance. I'll take any punishment that's coming to me if you'll——"

Again he broke off and sitting down beside her pressed her face to his. Ruth drew a deep, sobbing breath.

"I'm not fit to be a missionary. I've acted—acted like—a wildcat. I'm consumed with shame!"

"Don't!" entreated Jim. "Don't spoil it! You were glorious! I adore you for it." He gave a low laugh. "Old Susy was right. I've been a fool. Ruth—Ruth—I love you!"

She looked into his keen eyes as though she would read his soul. Jim answered her unspoken question. "No, you didn't bribe me! I'll make it my job to clean the matter up in decency. What you did was to show me the real Ruth!"

Ruth wrung her hands. "But that was not I! I was not myself!"

Jim took her tired face between his strong brown hands. "Does that mean you are sorry for what you did?"

The flame returned for a moment to the blue eyes. "No!"—passionately. "It was agony, but exquisite!"

"Ah, Ruth!" Jim laid his lips to hers. After a moment he said: "You must rest."

She dropped her tired head to her pillow, then looked up at him to say: "It's been like France. Lonely."

Jim's voice was husky. "I know! I knew all along that you were too much alone. I knew how I could feel toward you. And yet I let that tavern gang use me. Ruth—has every man got it in him to be a hound, like I've been?"

There was only the Madonna look in Ruth's eyes now. She smiled and her tired lids drooped.

Dawn, creeping slowly in at the window, pricked forth the kettle, cold and gray upon the forward stove-lid. It outlined Ruth's long body as she lay asleep under the red blanket. It threw into bas relief Jim Acton, with sleepless eyes, kneeling beside the bed, Ruth's hand clasped in his, ending his long night's vigil. And it was thus that Susy found them when she crawled in at red sun-up from God knows what futile and pathetic Indian errand.



## XIV

### November the Nineteenth

By ELSIE SINGMASTER

*Nominated by ARTHUR T. VANCE, Pictorial Review*

#### I

Standing rapt in painful meditation at the corner of Market and Fourth Streets in Harrisburg on Friday, November the seventeenth, old Riley Tyler realized suddenly that it was ten minutes after seven and that the last train for home started in five minutes. At eleven in the morning it had seemed imperative that he leave Gettysburg immediately, and now it seemed equally imperative that he return. The thought of missing the train terrified him, and he began to walk toward the station at a furious pace, unbecoming to his age, which was seventy-six, and to his appearance, which almost merited the adjective "magnificent." Half-way down the block he began to run, clutching his broad-brimmed hat. His beautiful white beard and his still abundant white hair, worn somewhat long, waved in the breeze created by his rapid motion. He looked like Father Time hurrying on some far more important errand than the catching of a train.

His unhappy absorption was not that of speculation upon a problem, profound or otherwise; he was not a learned man, who pondered upon the fourth dimension or the Aristotelian predicate. He was the janitor of a church. He had no family troubles, since he had no family, nor did he have financial difficulties, since he earned good wages and had ten thousand dollars in the bank. His set eyes had been fixed, not upon abstraction, but upon a picture which he saw regu-



larly each year as the nineteenth of November approached. It was this picture from which he had fled; but he saw it all day and he saw it now, as clearly defined as tho its background and figures were set out before him in the window of the nearest store.

The background was a stable dimly lighted by a large old lantern; the figures were a tall, thin boy and two tethered horses, the one black, high, and well bred, the mount for a large man; the other a short and ugly bay, a mount for a careless lad. There were sounds accompanying the picture: talk and laughter near by, the singing of young men in the distance, the trampling of horses in the street, and sometimes the soft, measured thudding of soldiers marching. There was also motion; old Riley saw the tall boy across the stable, in his hand a pair of tongs; heard him bid the tall horse "H'ist!" saw him draw out one nail, then another and another. He left the shoe dangling, the horse useless without the attention of a blacksmith. He looked then at the other beast, homely and undersized, on his face determination and most bitter hatred.

"You're good enough for him," he said with sharp triumph.

It was a strange picture to see in the department-store window against the manikins in the latest furs! But it was from this that old Riley went flying.

At the end of a square he dropped into a short subway and there met with an accident which threatened serious delay if not worse results. The stone steps were worn into hollows, and he was slightly confused by the unevenness of his footing; moreover the lighting was poor and his vision was no longer perfect. Over his head thundered a train, roaring into the Pennsylvania station on its way from Chicago to New York. Before him on the right approached a stout woman; before him on the left approached a white, woolly dog. Between the two, to the dim eyes of age, there was no connection. But a connection existed in the shape of a strong leash, and into this leash, as into a rope held taut for jumping, rushed Riley, and at once Riley and woman and dog were tangled into an apparently inseparable mass



from which issued a shriek, a protest, and a howl. The shriek said "Murder!" The protest was, "Madam, I humbly beg your pardon!" The howl cannot be reproduced in words.

"I am held up!" screamed the woman. "Police! Police!"

The last shout was not without its justification, for Riley had taken a wicked-looking knife from his pocket. As he severed the rope he heard the sound of an answering cry and rapid steps. Free, he dashed away, now Father Time in flight and not in pursuit, up the incline at the other end of the subway, across an open space, and into the station. A porter called, "Run, you can make it!" the onlookers cheered like those who watched John Gilpin; an official beckoned frantically from the iron gates; the conductor, Ed Thomas, who was Riley's old friend, waved a delaying signal to the engineer, and in a moment he was aboard and the train was in motion.

"Close shave," said Ed, stepping up after him.

Riley nodded, his breath gone; Ed spoke more truly than he knew.

He sat down in the rear car and closed his eyes. Most old hearts would have rebelled at such a chase, but Riley felt no ill effects except breathlessness, from which he soon recovered. Now that this terror was over, he reflected with both pity and amusement upon the astonishment of the poor woman and her dog; and by the time the train crossed the wide Susquehanna he could enjoy the myriad lights on the other bridges and along the city front. When he left Gettysburg in the morning he thought that he might not return until the next day, and he was sorry that he had not carried out his intention. The nervousness which had taken him away and which was now taking him back seemed preposterous.

Since automobiles had become common the trains carried few visitors to the battle-field, and now that there was a bus line which went by a shorter route there were few through passengers of any sort. Seeing no one whom he knew, Riley regretted that he had not risked the crowd and the somewhat



unpleasant familiarity of the bus. The train-ride consumed two hours, and without company the two seemed ten. He was suddenly afraid of the long, unoccupied period, and he rose and walked to the front of the car, hoping that some one who looked like a stranger might prove to be an acquaintance.

His scrutiny identified no one; no answering gaze met his pleasant glance. There were young people who had been at work or at school in Harrisburg, there were a few hunters going into the country so as to be on hand for early rabbits, there were three bearded Dunkers on their way to the Dunker school at Grantham, but there was no one whom he knew. The gaze of one pair of eyes followed him down the aisle, and presently their owner, whom Riley had overlooked, rose and approached his seat. He was a short, thin man of about fifty with very bright black eyes. In spite of his pointed brown beard, to which he held as if for support, he looked, standing by Riley, like a small boy addressing an aged and regal master.

"Sir," said he in a thin, little voice, "may I ask if you are a veteran of the Civil War?"

"No, sir," answered Riley. "I was too young."

"May I ask another question? Do you live in this neighborhood?"

"I live in Gettysburg."

The stranger seemed about to pull his brown beard out by the roots.

"Would it be asking too much to let me sit with you?"

Riley could do no less than move over, tho he began to feel uneasy. But this little man did not look as if he were of the tribe of historians whom Riley feared as a slave feared a Georgia trader. There was a sort of historian in Gettysburg, a Miss Gant, a tall, thin woman with a large nose, who was writing a book and from whom Riley was constantly fleeing. She talked to old people and pried things out of them which had much better be forgotten, and sent little articles to the newspapers—she should not pry anything out of him!

At Riley's welcoming motion the stranger trembled with



delight. He sat bolt upright and clasped his hands, still looking like a child.

"You saw it, sir? And heard it?"

As Riley regarded the little man a band of restraint within him snapped. He knew the battle like a book, from the first approach of the armies to the day when the last wounded soldier was carried away, but he never dared to talk about it in Gettysburg. He had come honestly by the fierce and bitter hatred of his youth; in '65, when Richmond fell, the celebrating villagers had taken pains to build bonfires before his mother's door.

Whatever the convictions of his manhood, the recollection of whispered epithets, "Traitors! Rebels!" would have kept him quiet even if it were not for private and personal reasons for silence. But he could talk to this little stranger who gasped for information like a fish for water. He reversed the seat in front of him and propped up his feet and took a pencil and a newspaper from his pocket. The commuters and the rabbit-hunters had left and only the Dunkers remained, talking quietly among themselves at the other end of the car. The train ran heavily as tho the engine were old or exhausted, and the little man still gasped in thrilled anticipation. Riley spread out the newspaper and began to draw a map; he, too, was thrilled.

"Here," he said. "This is Gettysburg. These are roads, like the spokes of a wheel. This is South Mountain. Now, Lee, he was way off down here when he made up his mind to attack Harrisburg."

"Which we have just left," interpolated the stranger rapturously.

"Yes," said Riley. "Now, Meade, he was down here too, and he starts north after Lee." Riley proceeded with the familiar story. "And so, on June 29, Early, he comes riding into Gettysburg."

"You saw him?" whispered the stranger.

Riley felt that he was taking a risk, but he took it boldly.

"I saw everything from now on."

The stranger clasped his hands, he twisted them together, he wound his arms round each other. The Dunkers left



the train; the engine started again, panting as tho in agony; the temperature in the car rose to an almost unendurable point, but to passing events, to delay and discomfort, raconteur and listener were alike oblivious. Riley concluded the preliminary explanations; now Buford detected the advance of the enemy, Reynolds hastened to meet his death, Doubleday rode up and down the lines, the railroad-cut received its tumbling and bloody guests, the Union troops fled in rout through the town, and the first day was over. Meanwhile the train stopped between stations and wheezed for ten minutes before it toiled on. At the stations the crew answered irritably the badinage of the agents, who prophesied they would never get past Idaville. There was loud laughter as the engine struggled desperately to depart.

The battle raged now on Culp's Hill, now on East Cemetery Hill, now on the Round Tops. Slocum rallied his forces, Sickles disobeyed orders, the Valley of Death was paved with wounded and dying, about Devil's Den the dead lay heaped. By the time the engine had climbed with anguish to Idaville the moon came out and looked down upon the slain of the second day. They were now more than an hour late, but time and space were nothing to Riley and the stranger. Sometimes the stranger interrupted with a frantic exclamation. "They must have been distracted to shoot each other down!" The thunder of guns echoed to the hills, Pickett was preparing for his charge, Longstreet was weeping, and into Lee's heart crept a cold chill. The stranger moistened his dry lips; he still sat like a child, his little feet not quite reaching the floor. There was a long pause in the journey at Goodyear, another at Peach Glen, but there was no pause in the recital. It was ten instead of eight-forty-five when they came to Biglerville.

"So it was over," said Riley with the sigh of one who wakes from a heroic dream. "All over."

The stranger clutched him by the arm.

"But afterward," he said, his hunger unappeased. "How did they take care of the sick and bury the dead? My God! Ten thousand dead men to bury!"

Riley looked a little frightened; awaking to the present,



he remembered that November the nineteenth was close at hand, and he saw the dim stable and the sullen, angry boy and the two horses. The details had changed; it was morning now, and the confusion outside had thickened, and beside the boy stood his employer, looking distraught at the dangling shoe. Riley saw another picture, like the close-up in a motion-picture: a man's face, dark, rugged, down-bent, sorrowful.

"It's time we were in long ago," he said nervously, fumbling for his watch. "You ought to be paid for riding on this road. Look at the time! We'll be two hours late."

The stranger cared nothing for time, and his hand refused to be shaken off.

"Of course, you know why I'm going to Gettysburg at this time of year," he said. "I want to stand in that cemetery where Lincoln stood. Now, you didn't see or hear him, I suppose!" The stranger meant, "Of course you heard and saw him! Now fill my soul with joy!" "Did you?" he said when Riley did not answer.

At last Riley got rid of the clutching hand.

"I'm going to the door to get some air. This car's like a furnace."

The stranger persisted. "But did you?"

"I did," said Riley. "But I was young." He rose and turned to step into the aisle, but the perverse stranger stretched his short legs across the space between the two seats.

"I understand they gave him a small horse to ride, and he looked ridiculous," he said. His aspect was innocent, but to Riley he had the malice of a venomous snake. He believed that at last he was found out.

"I was young," said Riley. He lifted his long legs and stepped over the slight barrier into the aisle.

"I'll bet it was done for spite or hatred," continued the stranger in his shrill voice. "There were plenty that would have been glad to make a fool of him. They thought he was a fool." The stranger rose and followed Riley toward the door.

"They called him a fool and a clown. One of his own



Cabinet said he was the original gorilla. The papers made fun of his speech—think of that!" The stranger began to recite shrilly, "Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers——"

Turning into a seat as tho to let this persistent terrier run past, Riley staggered and sat down perforce. It was the last curve, thank Heaven! Already the lights of Gettysburg gleamed brightly. He rose when the engine whistled, headed straight, and went back to fetch his hat. The train was slowing down, and the stranger was mounting the seat for his satchel. Riley could have reached it with a single motion of his arm, but he hastened to the door.

Outside he strode down the platform toward sleepy taxi-drivers. They were bitterly disappointed when they saw that the tall arrival was only Riley Tyler, and they all fixed hopeful eyes upon the little stranger following a long way behind, his body weighed down by luggage, his heart by Riley's harsh rebuff.

It was past eleven when Riley unlocked the door of his house. Usually he had a bite to eat and played several records on his phonograph before going to bed. He liked marches and heroic songs, and of all "The Two Grenadiers" was his favorite. He had several records of the air, two solos by famous barytones, and one band record. He often played it twice, and sang the concluding words, about which there was something vaguely inspiring and reassuring:

Alert and still in my grave arrayed,  
 Like a sentinel I'll be lying,  
 Until I hear the loud cannonade,  
 The neigh of the chargers replying.  
 Then over my grave will my Emperor ride,  
 The swords will be flashing and falling!  
 And hearing a voice, I'll arise from the dead;  
 My Emperor! My Emperor is calling!

But to-night he had no desire to hear music. He ate a lunch of bread and butter and thick slices of Lebanon Bologna and went to bed. He slept heavily, but he tossed and threw the covers off, and sometimes he groaned.



## II

On Saturday Riley rose early and went to the outdoor market, which had been continued into November because of mild weather. In Center Square wagons and automobiles were parked close together against the curb. It was only a little after seven and the sun had been up less than an hour, but the square was crowded with buyers.

Riley stopped at the edge of the throng and stood blinking, his market basket in his hand. All that he needed he could have bought later in the day, but he did not wish to be on the street at an hour when he might encounter the stranger. Aware that he had been standing a long time, he was about to turn away when he felt a hand on his arm. Several seconds passed before he looked down—could it be that the little man, like the wolf in the nursery story, was up early too? The poor pig was no more terrified than Riley.

But he was unnecessarily alarmed; his eyes fell not upon the face of the stranger, but upon the shoulder of tall Miss Gant. Miss Gant smiled at him, and it seemed that her nose quivered like a rabbit's following up the scent of cabbage.

"You too are overwhelmed by thought of what has happened here," she said, in her queer, sentimental way. "I've stood still a long time looking at the roof which sheltered the Knight of Sorrow." She squinted across the square at the gray house where Lincoln slept. "You can see it, I know, in recollection as well as in imagination—the crowd, the regiments of soldiers, the heroes. You can hear the bands and the singing. Then comes the great figure, ill-mounted, almost ludicrous, scorned by many." Miss Gant sniffed feelingly. "I have often wondered who provided that poor Rosinante."

"That poor what?" asked Riley, puzzled.

"That poor Rosinante," explained Miss Gant, pleased to exhibit her knowledge. "I spoke figuratively. The horse of *Don Quixote*, you know. It is said a better mount had been provided, and that there was some accident at the last and it was too late to get another, but I consider that a fable,



Mr. Tyler." Miss Gant came a little closer, her long nose quivering the more. "I have wondered whether that horse was not vicious as well as small, whether there was not back of it a devilish"—Miss Gant used this word explosively and as one justified—"a devilish plot, Mr. Tyler."

Riley took a step away.

"Oh, I hope not!"

Miss Gant took a step forward.

"I think I'll make that incident the subject of research. It's about the only one left in mystery. Who provided that horse? Was he a loyal citizen? How did he explain, how did the committee explain to the loyal section of our country the furnishing of a pony for a man six feet four? How——"

"I don't think it was a pony," interrupted Riley in agony. Now he was lost! "It was a smallish horse."

But Miss Gant was pursuing another train of thought.

"In meditating upon him—I do a good deal of meditating, Mr. Tyler—I have often reflected upon his good fortune in leaving us when the blush of glory still mantled his cheek. We did not see him pine and fade away—there is some poetry which expresses this better than I can, but I can not remember it. He did not live through the trying period of reconstruction. I have often felt that I ought to follow this line of thought, which is entirely original."

Riley's cheeks quivered with a hysterical spasm. He wanted to shout to her, "Chestnuts! It's not original—you read it somewhere." But he was afraid of Miss Gant. He bade her good morning and moved away with his basket. Her nose was too long, her skirts were too short, and he hated her.

He spent Saturday afternoon at the College Church, where he was janitor. There was a promise of cold weather and he built a light fire. When he was not tormented by his vision he liked to work in the church because it had a famous history. In the evening he went to the barber-shop, where he was accustomed to put in a good many hours. He needed no barbering, but he did need sadly a little company after a lonely day. It was not likely that the stranger would penetrate thither, and certainly Miss Gant would not come!



Opening the door, he heard a loud argument, of which he could distinguish at first only, "It was! . . . It wasn't!" "There were! . . . There weren't!" The subject, he gathered, as he found a chair along the wall, was the relative American losses in the Civil and World Wars. Nobody had any figures, but the old veterans were certain of their statements and so were the young veterans. Riley took a little clipping from his pocket. Upon this subject, which involved no question of North and South, he could speak with safety.

"At the time of the Civil War the United States had a population of about twenty-eight million," he read. "Out of these about one-tenth were in the armies, and out of this tenth one-seventh were killed in battle or died of wounds.

"At the time of the World War the United States had a population of about one hundred million. Out of these only one-twenty-fifth were in the armies, and out of this twenty-fifth, only one-fiftieth were killed or died of disease."

"See!" yelled the older veterans.

"It isn't so!" shouted a young man.

"Official figures," said Riley, folding his paper. His uneasiness had vanished.

"Don't believe your figures," said another young man.

"Were you in the war?" asked someone politely of Riley.

"I wasn't eighteen till sixty-five."

"Did you see Old Abe?" This too was an innocent question.

"I was too young to take much account."

"They say he had such a small horse to ride that he looked as if he could have walked off over his head."

Involuntarily Riley lifted his hand to hide his face and, getting up, started slowly toward the door.

"Going, Riley?" said the barber.

"Yes," he said, pronouncing the simple word with difficulty.

As he went he met the preacher coming in for a parcel left there yesterday.

"Good evening," he said, addressing everybody. "I'd be happy to see you all in church to-morrow. It will be the



nineteenth of November and I'm going to preach about Lincoln."

### III

Riley sat in the right-hand corner of the rear of the church. His chair was higher than the pews, and he prided himself upon his share in keeping the services moving smoothly. On a dark morning he could tell the instant when the light became too dim for comfort and the instant when daylight was again sufficient. He knew from the look of Professor Barrett's back when the window must be closed, and from the quiver of Mrs. Scarlett's feather when it must be opened. He recognized the exact moment when the boys on the rear seats had gone far enough. He knew which students drew in hymn-books and which scarred the backs of the pews with the nails in their shoes. About the worst offender he quoted a passage which he believed came from the Bible, "I have hated many things, but nothing like him, and the Lord will hate him."

The service opened with the singing of "A Mighty Stronghold Is Our God," and Riley joined in with gusto. He had seen nothing of the little stranger, who had probably left town, and he had reminded himself that the visit to Gettysburg was but one incident among many in the life of Abraham Lincoln and that the minister had but a half-hour in which to discuss his whole career. If he did allude to Gettysburg, the fact that Lincoln had a small horse to ride was too insignificant and immaterial a point to mention. It was unlikely that the preacher had even heard of it; it was not reported in the official histories, but only in personal reminiscences of merely local interest.

The minister spoke rapidly, and when he passed the year '63 without alluding to Gettysburg, Riley drew a long breath; so long and loud that the boys near by thought he was awaking from sleep and giggled softly. From now on he listened with joy so intense that it was almost painful. He forgot the mistaken views of his family; he forgot the dimly lighted stable; he listened as one able at last to worship



openly a divinity whom he has hitherto had to visit in secret. He leaned forward a little, and the beauty of his old head and its rapt expression impressed even the unthinking youths beside him.

But his rapture did not last ; he was suddenly plunged back into the pit, even into a deeper pit. Said the young preacher in his pleasant, earnest voice :

"We can not leave our contemplation of this great and beloved figure without recalling that this is the nineteenth of November and that on another nineteenth of November he trod these streets, slept under a roof of this town, looked upon our sky and our beautiful hills. He was not then recognized as a hero except by the far-seeing. He was jeered at, mocked, scorned, despised, and rejected of many men. Even his great words uttered here were received by thousands with laughter. It is said they gave him a small horse to ride and that he looked ridiculous. That incident has now a mysterious suggestiveness ; often God makes the wickedness of men to serve His purpose. There was Another Who rode a palm-strewn road on a small beast to a triumph beyond which waited Golgotha."

Riley sank back into his chair, a cold sweat upon him. He could not believe that he had heard aright, yet every word was graven on his mind. A new aspect of this situation opened ; if he had provided this parallel, then the ghouls would be more than ever on his track. Even the friendly preacher, whom he loved, might try to develop further this interesting idea !

He heard none of the brief conclusion, and the procession out of church seemed interminable. He went home, and in his house muttered as he prepared his dinner. He could not eat, and when there was a knock at the door he started with terror. Without stood the kindly minister.

"Professor Law and Dr. Tolman and half a dozen other men who remember Lincoln are going to walk out to the cemetery with me—wouldn't you like to come too?"

Riley hunted desperately for an excuse.

"Some one is coming to see me."



"But the afternoon is so beautiful; it's a pity not to be out-of-doors."

"I wish I could go with you," said Riley from his heart.

As if to punish him for his lie, some one did come to see him. Presently there was another knock, this time at his front door, and he peered out through the sidelight. Miss Gant stood waiting; she had still the aspect of the rabbit who sniffs cabbage. To Riley she looked like one who believes cabbage near at hand. He tiptoed through the house, flew down the boardwalk to the rear gate, and fled out Long Lane toward the fields. His anxious mind compared his crime now to that of Booth, of Guiteau, of Czolgosz.

Cutting through the Union battle-line where General Lee had hoped to penetrate, he went toward the southeast, avoiding monuments and markers and traveled roads, and hastening as tho the stranger and Miss Gant and the preacher and all curious persons were pursuing him. His active imagination pictured newspaper reports with large head-lines, headings of chapters in books, ignominy forever. But he could say in defense that the substituted horse was quieter than the tall black one he had disabled, that no vicious purpose had been in his mind, that he had only meant to play a practical joke. He stopped once or twice in order to think better and, standing still, he talked to himself.

Then suddenly he shook himself as tho he shook off a burden. He would go home and never repeat this nonsense. He looked at his watch; it was half past three. The windows of the church must be closed, the bulletins and hymn-books placed neatly in the racks, and a little draft turned on the fire. He would cross to the Baltimore Pike as quickly as possible.

But when he was facing the west his heart sank. No shaking of his shoulders, no exercise of common sense, no assurance of freedom from publicity would rid him of his burden. Lincoln had been held in contempt and he had promoted it; he, Riley Tyler, had made Abraham Lincoln ridiculous in the eyes of twenty thousand human beings. His remorse seemed impossible to bear; he would cheerfully exchange it for infamy if he could forgive himself.



The road home seemed long; Round Top lay at an immeasurable distance. He plodded on, hoping that some one would offer him a ride, but all the cars were going away from Gettysburg. He climbed one hill, then another; from here he could shorten his way by crossing first the citizens' cemetery, then the National Cemetery.

Walking rapidly among the thick-set graves, he passed the spot where he would one day lie and wished himself there, away from thought. Stepping over the stile in the evergreen hedge, he walked more slowly. He often came thither on Sunday afternoons, believing this to be not only the most beautiful spot in the neighborhood of Gettysburg, but the most beautiful in the world. Even in his wretchedness he could not fail to see the unfaded emerald of the grass, the dark, lofty wall of the spruces, the brilliant, honey-colored foliage of Norway maples, lighted by the fast-sinking sun. At the far end there was a memorial to the butt of his bitter joke, an exedra with a fine portrait bust and a bronze plate bearing the dedicatory speech. He had almost walked into it before he realized where he was.

In terror he whirled about and looked the other way, toward the marble shafts rising to the treetops and the thousands of tiny headstones dotting the sward in regular ranks. He had the place to himself; the minister and his friends had long since completed their pious pilgrimage, the tourists had sped homeward, and even the birds that lingered late in this sheltered sanctuary were still. He was afraid to look at the bronze face, but an irresistible force turned him round.

The head was like that living head which he remembered; bent, sorrowful, and inexpressibly pitying and tender. Hot, slow tears filled his eyes, welling up from his heart. He felt indignant toward the young minister who had added a new and sadder reflection to those which he had to bear already, and he appealed to the sad face as if for vindication and comfort.

Suddenly as he gazed his startled heart missed a beat. Blinking back the tears, then rubbing his eyes with his hand, he stared. Something queer had happened; the red sun, which seemed to lie upon the crest of the hills, sent its last



rays directly upon the memorial, and the glittering horizontal beams had a strange effect upon the face and upon Riley. There was a twinkle in the bronze eye, a twist of unmistakable humor in the corner of the grave mouth. On November 19, '63, those eyes had searched Riley's soul; now they searched it again. Then they seemed to say, "Unkind! Unkind!" Now they said, "Oh, foolish! foolish!" An amazing idea came into Riley's mind—it was queer that it had been almost sixty years in taking shape. He put it into loud, shrill words.

"You never cared a snap of your finger what kind of a horse you rode!" He put it into other words. "You're laughing at me! You never gave a rip!"

He sat down weakly on a bench, resisting an impulse to kneel. The sun still showed half its great circle and the twinkle still enlivened the eye; the smile still played round the fine mouth. He sat till twilight blotted out twinkle and smile. Then he rose; he would like to lay his hand on the bronze cheek, but this impulse he resisted also. His eyes traveled across the green hedge to the dim place set with crowded white stones where he could distinguish the monument beside which he would soon lie. He grew pale, but it was with expectation, not with terror. A great wind seemed to blow upon him, sending chills down his spine, lifting his hair. It came and passed and he walked on. His gait was shaky as tho he felt the wind, and martial as tho he timed his steps to music. He heard music in his soul, and he stood still to hear more clearly.

Alert and still in my grave arrayed,  
 Like a sentinel I'll be lying,  
 Until I hear the loud cannonade,  
 The neigh of the chargers replying.  
 Then over my grave will my Emperor ride,  
 And swords will be flashing and falling!  
 And hearing a voice, I'll rise from the dead;  
 My Emperor! My Emperor is calling!

He understood now why he had played the song a thousand times. He went on, still marching, as tho the trump of resurrection had already sounded.



## XV

### Tim of Bush Valley

By A. M. CHISHOLM

*Selected by* CHARLES AGNEW MACLEAN, *Popular*

Bush Valley runs back from the edge of the rolling, partly wooded foothill country to the feet of the great hills themselves. Looking eastward from any eminence the sky comes down to meet the earth in an unbroken horizon line, rimming a country of ranches and of little towns at twenty and thirty mile intervals. But looking westward there is no far-flung horizon line. Instead there is a jagged line of towering mountain peaks. From the western end of the valley a pass leads into a country which lies to-day as it was when Blackfoot and Stoney and Kootenai trod it, to hunt and to carry war.

But the valley itself is fertile, wooded and watered by a large mountain creek, by eastern standards a river. There, when prairie lands rose in price and homesteads were hard to obtain, Government land might still be had; and accordingly to it came men with little money, who desired to make homes and were not afraid of the heavy labor of clearing land. One of the first of these was Michael Rigney.

Rigney was a product of the Eastern pineries, in which he had worked from the time he could swing an ax. He came West to better his condition, leaving behind him temporarily a wife and growing family. He worked at such jobs as he could obtain, saving his wages and all the time drifting westward, and at last came to the foothills. He heard of Bush Valley and made a lone excursion up it,



and liked it. The creek put him in mind of the driving streams of his native habitat.

"Sure enough 'tis like home," he said aloud, with the warm friendliness of the man who loves running water as the hillman loves his hills. "They's wood, plenty, to burn, an' the soil is good. It'll do."

So he filed on the piece of land of his choice, and wrote to his wife that he had done so and would send for her as soon as he could.

That winter he worked with a survey party, and in the spring came into the valley again with a team of old grays cast from a contractor's outfit, a breaking plow, a few tools and a grubstake. When the grubstake ran out he had built single handed a log house and stable, broken and cleared a patch of land, and fenced it. Again he was forced to get a job and work for others through the winter. But in the summer he sent for his wife and family, the latter consisting of Timothy, aged twelve; Teresa, aged nine; Bernard, aged seven, and the twins, John and Terence, aged five.

Mike Rigney found that he had to get acquainted afresh with his family. In the years of his absence the children had grown away from him and he from them. He was almost a stranger. He came upon his eldest born one day shortly after their arrival, when the boy had hit his thumb with a hammer and was using language decidedly unsuited to his years.

"Shut up!" the man commanded. "Them's no words for a boy to know, let alone say. Who learnt you?"

It appeared that the boy had had no special tutor. He was a stocky urchin, with a freckled face, reddish, sandy hair, and clear blue eyes. The objectionable phrases, broadcasted by teamsters, river drivers and others had been picked out of the air by that wondrous receiving set, a boy's memory.

"Never let me hear you say nawthin' like that again," Mike admonished him.

"You say it—only better," his son argued.

Mike could not deny it.

"I'm a man," he said. "Wait till you grow up before you curse—like smokin'."



"I've smoked lots," the young hopeful stated proudly.

"You've gone to the divil intirely since I've been away," his father frowned. "You'll quit them things, or I'll larrup the life out of ye. Did ye ever steal, tell me?"

"Yes," the boy admitted frankly.

"Well, I be dam'!" his father exclaimed. "But annyways ye're no liar. What have ye stole?"

It appeared that the boy had stolen apples, melons, pies and doughnuts. He looked his father in the eye as he confessed.

"Um," said Mike with memories of his own boyhood. "Them's bad tricks, of course, but more like measles an' whoopin' coughs. How d'ye think ye'll like it here, sonny?"

"I dunno," the boy replied. "Is there fishin'?"

"Lots," his father nodded. "An' they's pa'tridges, an' rabbits, an' deer, an' now an' then a bear."

"Gee!" the boy exclaimed, his eyes shining.

"Later on, maybe me an' you can take a day or so off an' go huntin'," Mike promised. "But just now there's lots else to do, an' you'll have to help me all you can. I wisht I could send ye to school, but there's none yet near enough for ye to go to."

"I hate school," Tim stated.

"Like enough," his father responded with understanding. "So did I. An' bekase I never had no schoolin' I've had poor jobs wid poor pay, bein' fit for no better. So to school ye go, as soon as there is one nigh to hand."

Frosts came, the leaves fell and yellowed the valley, and young Tim and his father had a few glorious days afiel. Apart from the sport of it, it helped to fill the larder. Then came a tracking snow, and they laid in their winter's meat in the form of venison. Mike, who was a fair woodsman and had dabbled in trapping, as have most of his kind, taught the boy how to set traps and snares. Tim ran a small trap line and was entirely happy.

The Rigneys spent their first Christmas in the new home quite happily, having at least plenty to eat and plenty of fuel. And then, because he must have money to feed and clothe his family until the ranch became productive, Mike Rigney



got a job with a logging outfit. He came back in the spring, and at once threw himself into the work of clearing more land.

Tim helped him, and they cleared and broke an additional five acres, smashed the sod to pieces with a set of borrowed harrows and seeded it, broadcasting, for they had no drill. They enlarged the space of their root crops and put in a generous kitchen garden. These tasks done they turned to the problem of an irrigation ditch. That job took them into the heat of summer, and it was a great day when the cool creek water first flowed muddily through the raw ditch and down the prepared marks in the little field. Then the cutting season came, and Mike Rigney took his crop with a scythe, and went away to earn wages in the great wheat fields, and later to join a threshing gang.

His father away, young Tim was the man of the ranch. He got the roots up and in, and drove the team. The wise old grays handled themselves, nominally obeying him, but in reality obeying the succession of hard-swearing, mackinaw-clad teamsters who had taken and applied the docile power of their best years.

That summer and fall the little brush ranch was less lonely. There were more travelers on the valley trail. Mainly they were fire patrols, game wardens, timber cruisers, with a leaven of prospective settlers. And at more or less regular intervals there would be a straight-backed, red-coated rider with a stiff-brimmed pony hat tilted against the sun. Invariably these riders were mounted on tall, rangy horses of speed and bottom, cared for and groomed and carefully shod horses that followed their masters like dogs, and knew, some of them, such tricks as lying down at the word of command or lifting a forefoot to shake hands—the horses of the Mounted Police.

Young Tim conceived a vast respect for these riders who combined in themselves the godlike attributes of police, soldiers and frontiersmen. In particular he admired Constable Sam Hake, who was stationed at Bush River Crossing, some fifteen miles distant. Hake had wintered in the Far North, and now and then when his patrol brought him that way he



would yarn to Tim as they lay in the shade through a long summer's nooning. Books were few in the Rigney household, and what there were did not appeal to a boy. But from Hake's tales of that far country Tim stored up romance which he lived over while his hands were busy with prosaic tasks, dreamed of when his day's work was done, and took with him to his blankets at night.

Now, while the affairs of the Rigneys were going forward more or less satisfactorily, the tide of settlement was beginning to rise, and little wavelets of it were creeping toward them. Towns were beginning to spring up in the foothill country. Clydebank, some fifty miles away, had streets, stores, electric lights and a bank. Smaller towns began to grow nearer at hand. Settlement crept up the valley, so that the Rigneys had neighbors but a few miles away. And at last—to Tim's secret disgust—that fall a school was established within five miles of them, and it was decreed that he and Tessie and young Barney should attend it.

They made the ten-mile round trip daily, five days in the week, from crisp September to languorous June. They made it in the fall mornings when the fogs hung above the valley and in the golden afternoons when the yellowed leaves cluttered the trails; made it in the bitter winter mornings when frost rimed the cheeks, and the sun, scarcely risen, hung far to southward, hazed with attendant sundogs, with light but no heat; made it in the days of spring when the melting snows were a-trickle, and moist patches of earth showed, and the first robins and bluebirds and flute-noted meadow larks came back, and the clamor of the northing geese sounded overhead.

Truth to tell, young Tim was no scholar. He did his best, and he attacked his tasks with a determined scowl, as he would have attacked an obstinate root. But school books—as opposed to and distinguished from other books which told tales in which the soul of a boy might revel as his bare body delighted in the waters of a swimming hole—seemed to him to be an invention of the evil one, wherein were collected of malice all the problems which no regular fellow could understand.



But out of school he was an acknowledged leader by virtue of the strength and activity which abode in his small, sturdy body, and a perfect willingness to match them against anybody's. He possessed too a certain quality of foresight in the way of forecasting consequences of boyish pranks, and so was a restraining influence. He was dependable. When he said he would do a thing it was as good as done. And he looked after his sister and brothers with the solicitude of a hen with two chicks.

At the closing of the fall term there was a Christmas tree at the school house, with gifts for every child. Also there was a program of songs and recitations by the pupils.

The Rigneys attended in a body. Tessie and young Barney acquitted themselves with credit; but Tim, to whose hard lot it had fallen to recite "The Village Blacksmith," made a bad mess of it.

Tim rendered verse much as a cow wades through a swamp, with the same slow determination and with much the same tendency to bog down. He had been letter perfect the day before; but when he faced the crowd with a scowl of fierce determination, the whole thing passed from his mind, leaving an utter blank. With prompting he achieved the first stanza, stammered his way with more prompting through the next, and then stuck hopelessly, with the finality of a dead engine.

"Go on, Tim," the teacher prompted. "Week in, week out"——

"'We kin, we kout,'" Tim repeated loyally, and came to a full stop amid titters.

"'From morn till night.'" the girl prompted with sinking heart. But Tim was sunk without trace. "Oh, Tim!" she whispered tensely, "can't you remember?"

Tim shook his head.

"I forget the dam' thing," he said in a perfectly audible voice, and descended to hide his shame in the obscurity of the back seats. Later his father took him to task.

"'Tis not that I mind ye fallin' down on the piece that was set ye f'r to speak," he said. "But ye should not have swore."

"I know," Tim admitted penitently. "I did not go for to



say it. It slipped off me tongue before I thought. Makin' po'try about a blacksmith is crazy, anyway. But I will tell the teacher I am sorry."

"'Tis all a man can do most times," Mike nodded. "As ye say, blacksmiths is no things to make po'try about. But swearin' in public sounds like—I mean, 'tis not right."

So far things had gone very well with the Rigneys; but the following summer Fate struck them heavily. In July Mike Rigney's wife died suddenly; and in a dry August a brush fire swept down on the little ranch. The house and stable were saved, but the stacks went, and most of the standing crop was seared with the scorching breath of the fire. The old grays survived, but two good cows never came out of the brush.

When Mike Rigney had buried his wife, and bought enough feed to bring his remaining stock through the winter and a grubstake for his family, he was in debt and worse off than he had been two years before. Sad-eyed and discouraged he took counsel with his son, whom little by little he had admitted to terms almost of equality.

"I must get me a winter's job in the camps," he said. "An' that'll mean ye'll have to run the place, Tim."

"I can do it," said young Tim with confidence.

"'Tis takin' ye away from school when it opens," his father went on regretfully; "an' Barney an' Tessie too, for he's big enough to help ye wid the fall work, an' she must keep house an' cook. After Christmas maybe ye can go. 'Tis a shame to lose yer schoolin', but poverty's a hard master."

"There's a new teacher," said Tim. "Don't worry, father. I'll be lookin' after the ranch all right, an' the kids too."

So Mike Rigney got a job in a logging camp, where, to put a climax on the misfortunes of the Rigneys, a log slipped as he was working on a skidway. He came out of it with a fracture of the right leg, several broken ribs and the possibility of internal injuries. But he was lucky to be alive, for a rolling log is the most diabolically malevolent of inanimate things. He was driven in a springless wagon over frozen, rutted roads bare of snow eighty miles to a hospital.



The boys passed the hat and sent Tim thirty dollars. Tim could not go to his father, because he was needed at home. He wrote him the first letter he had ever written to anybody, an epistle of weird spelling and fearful construction, but nevertheless direct. This missive he committed to the care of Sam Hake, to be posted.

"But dammit, kid," said Hake when he heard the bad news, "can you make out all right? How are you fixed for grub?"

"Fine," said Tim. "We got lots."

Hake sized up the wood pile and estimated the feed stacks.

"Be careful of your fires, son," he advised, "especially on cold mornings. Don't leave your drafts open too long. Lots of fires start that way."

"I know," Tim nodded.

"Well," said Hake, swinging into the saddle and turning up the collar of his fur reefer against the cold north wind, "I'll be along every so often. So long, son."

He made a point of riding that way, and he told the Rigneys' nearest neighbors to keep an eye on them and report to him at once if anything untoward occurred. But nothing did. And so time drew on into a bleak December which brought no snow to muffle the iron-hard trails.

## II

Old man Sankey, like Young Lochinvar, rode out of the West and he rode all alone; but there his resemblance to the gay young gallant of the ballad ended. He was not seeking a bride, having left such frivolities behind him with the years, as memories that burned rather than blessed. He rode a big, sure-footed buckskin cayuse with the peculiar back stripe which is popularly supposed to indicate excellent horseflesh. He rode alone for personal and private reasons, and to all appearances he rode unarmed, though an inspection of the blanket roll tied to his saddle cantle would have revealed a late model of the handy invention of the late Col. Colt, calibre forty-five, oddly assorted with a set of climbing



irons such as are used by telephone linemen, and a heavy pair of cutting pliers bound with insulating tape.

Mr. Sankey jogged out of the hills and down Bush Valley, and for reasons of his own he avoided ranches and chance wayfarers. But a mile or so from the Rigney ranch a persistent clicking attracted his attention. Knowing quite well what caused it he dismounted and lifted the buckskin's nigh front hoof. Loose shoe. Mr. Sankey expressed his opinion of a certain smith in verbiage which should have created a limited torrid zone in his immediate vicinity, did the best he could with a couple of stones, and rode on very slowly till he came in sight of the Rigney ranch, where Tim was busy with his evening chores. Mr. Sankey, regretting the necessity, rode in.

"Evenin', son," he observed with a benevolent smile, for a long life had taught him that politeness is a cheap coin of surprising purchasing power. "I'm wonderin' if you got a few horseshoe nails and a hammer I could borrow."

Tim had. He produced a hammer, nails and a pair of pincers. Mr. Sankey smiled approvingly and proceeded to reset the shoe.

"That cayuse is fresh shod," Tim observed as he watched him. "I guess you've been up against a bum blacksmith, mister."

"So I have, by the glory eternal," Mr. Sankey admitted, softening the nature of the assurance quite needlessly out of deference to the age of his auditor. "You got a good eye."

"Anybody could see that," said Tim. "Corkin' dulls darn' quick on frozen trails when there's no snow."

"So it does," Mr. Sankey agreed regretfully. He let the leg from the grip of his knees and straightened his back. "Here's a dollar for you, son, and thanks."

"Nope"" said Tim, shaking his head.

"Hey!" Mr. Sankey ejaculated in astonishment. "You p'ison rich or p'ison proud?"

"Can't take nothin' for helpin' a man out," said Tim.

"It used to be that way when the West was a white man's country," Mr. Sankey returned. "Well, son, I'm obliged."



356 *The World's Best Short Stories of 1925*

"'Sall right," said Tim. "You better stay for supper. It'll be ready in ten minutes."

"I wouldn't want to put your ma out," said Mr. Sankey.

"Ma's dead," Tim informed him bluntly.

"That's too bad," Mr. Sankey sympathized. "Who does the cookin'? Your pa?"

"My sister does it. Pa's in the hospital with a busted leg. There's just me and the kids."

"Why, how old be you, son?"

"Fourteen," Tim told him.

"Just you and the kids, hey," said Mr. Sankey.

"Well, that's gettin' along in life," Mr. Sankey admitted gravely. "You can look after the kids, of course. And maybe the neighbors help with the heavy work."

"Sam Hake helped me," said Tim.

"Sam must be a good feller."

"You bet," Tim agreed.

"Live close by?"

"No, he lives at the Crossing. He's a mountie."

Mr. Sankey started slightly.

"Them mounted police is good people," he said. "I'd like to meet him. You expectin' him along this evenin', maybe?"

"He was here yesterday and he won't come again till next week."

"Oh," said Mr. Sankey. "Well, since you've been kind enough to ask me, son, I will stay for supper."

He quite won Tessie Rigney's heart by his praise of her cooking. Later he smoked by the fire and told them thrilling stories of the West of an earlier day. He seemed in no hurry to go about his business, whatever it was, and Tim could do no less than ask him to stay the night. So Mr. Sankey stayed.

"Goin' to be sorter lonesome for you Christmas, ain't it," he said, "with your pa in the hospital?"

"Sort of," Tim admitted. "But there's a Christmas tree at the school house Christmas Eve, and I'm goin' to take the kids."

"Santa Claus visitin' there that night?"

"There were presents for all the kids last year, whether



they went to school or not," said Tim. "We ain't been able to go this fall, but maybe we can after Christmas."

In the morning when Mr. Sankey had gone, Tessie found a five-dollar bill on the pillow where his head had lain, and a scrap of paper bearing the inscription, "Merry Xmas." She brought both to Tim.

"He shouldn't have done that," Tim frowned. "We weren't doing it for pay. What'll we do with it, Tess?"

"I don't know," said Miss Tess, who had several dozen uses for it.

"S'pose we send it to dad for Christmas," Tim suggested. "He's had a hard racket, and he can buy a pipe and smokin'. Maybe it'll cheer him up."

"All right," little Tess agreed loyally.

Meanwhile Mr. Sankey rode on, and giving the Crossing a wide berth for reasons of his own, came to the little town of Pilot Hill. There he stabled his buckskin and took hired conveyance to the larger town of Clydebank, which lay some twelve miles to the southward. He put up at a cheap hotel, and loitered about apparently aimlessly for some days, occasionally entering the Commercial Bank to get bills changed. Then he returned to Pilot Hill, where he had his buckskin newly sharp-shod all around, superintending the job himself. Also he added a farrier's hammer and nails to his equipment.

On the afternoon of December 24 he rode into Clydebank; but this time he rode directly to the rear of the frame building which was occupied by the Commercial Bank. The vicinity was deserted. Mr. Sankey looked at his watch, which, on a previous visit he had synchronized with the bank's clock. It was ten minutes past three, precisely. He dismounted, and instead of dropping his cayuse's reins merely, he hitched the halter shank to a telephone pole, anchoring him securely. Then he took a gunny sack from the saddle and entered a shed used for fuel and storage annexed to the building proper. Inside this, he gently tried the door which gave admission to the bank itself, finding it—as he had found it on a previous experimental occasion—unlocked. Then he tied a large, dark handkerchief across his face just below the level of his eyes, wrapped the fingers of his right hand familiarly around the



butt of an eight-inch six-shooter, and went in to transact his banking business.

At three o'clock sharp the bank had closed and locked its front door, as was its custom. It had been a busy day. Cash deposits had been large. The members of the bank staff were hurrying, for they were anxious to get away to attend to their own affairs. The door of the safe stood open to receive books and securities and currency. The first intimation the staff had of a variation of the routine was the appearance of Mr. Sankey in his working garb.

"Stick 'em up!" said Mr. Sankey, emphasizing the request with the six-shooter. He looked as if he meant business, and his appearance was not at all deceptive, for he did mean it. "Up!" he commanded through the handkerchief in decidedly stimulating accents.

As an office property the Commercial Bank supplied each of its branches with a nickel-plated pocket edition, by courtesy a revolver; the excellent theory being that in case of need some employee who very possibly had never fired a revolver in his life would effectually defend the bank's property therewith. But in this case nobody was near this alleged weapon. Nor was Mr. Sankey where he should have been, outside the grill, but inside, where he had no business—save his present business—to be. Manager and staff were brave enough, but an attempt to get a gun which one does not know how to use, while dominated by one in the hands of an individual who not only knows how but will use his as a matter of business if forced to do so, does not come under the heading of bravery, but more usually among the obituaries. So they obeyed orders.

"That's right," Mr. Sankey approved pleasantly. "You two big fellers turn round and face the wall. You littlest feller, pull down the winder blind—right down. Now, you take these here ropes and tie your friends' hands."

"I won't," said the junior, who was the "little feller."

"Yes you will," said Mr. Sankey with a gentleness more convincing than bluster. "And I'll explain why, clear, at the start. After that I won't do no more explainin', except with this gun. I'm doin' this on my lone. I ain't got no part-



ners, so you can see I ain't out to take a single chance. And I won't. I don't want to hurt you boys, but I'll shoot the first one of you that makes a bad move or don't obey orders. I'm tellin' you friendly, but I'm tellin' you cold. I mean it, and if you think I don't you're makin' an awful mistake. Now, you little feller—tie 'em!"

And the junior who was a good, nervy boy, but had an ambition to be a bank director some day, tied them.

"Now, step through your hands," Mr. Sankey ordered. "Hold up yours," he commanded the junior, and expertly dropped a looped rope over them, drew it tight and flipped a couple of turns in a way which would have proved to any old cowman that he had handled a rope before. And at that moment somebody tried the front door, and finding it fast, knocked.

"Quiet!" Mr. Sankey hissed, his eyes narrowing to menacing points of light. His gun poised before them as a snake about to strike. "The man that answers is through with bankin'. Quiet!"

"Oh, Cowan!" a voice called.

Cowan, the manager, opened his lips, looked into the dark ring that suddenly bore upon a point midway between his eyes and into the cold, deadly eyes behind it, and decided that he liked banking. Through the utter silence they could hear footsteps outside receding.

Mr. Sankey commanded his prisoners to lie down, and when they had done so he tied their feet. Then he gagged them with office towels. When they were helpless and voiceless he looted counters, drawers and safe, working fast but overlooking nothing, dumping currency and any papers which seemed to be of value into a gunny sack to be sorted later. After a careful look around to make sure that he had overlooked nothing he added fuel to the stove and regulated the drafts.

"Because it may be some time before anybody finds you, and I wouldn't want you boys to be cold," he informed them considerably. "I'm sure sorry to leave you like this, but business is business. So long, boys—and Merry Christmas!"

With which courteous wish Mr. Sankey left them to their



reflections. He tied the gunny sack to his saddle, mounted and rode into the growing dusk; not hurrying, for he was too wise in the technic of a getaway to attract attention by undue speed, and far too good a horseman to take anything out of his steed at the beginning of a long ride. Indeed, so far from exhibiting any uneasiness, as he rode out of town he hummed a simple carol not to be found in any Christmas collection.

### III

The approach of Christmas brought Tim worries such as are as a rule confined to and borne by adult heads of households. He wanted to provide some modest gifts for the younger children, but he had no money, and he knew that the Rigney credit already had been heavily strained. The money he had received from the camp had gone. So had Mr. Sankey's five-dollar bill, which would have solved the problem. In this strait he received a letter from his father. And when it came to the written word father had little on son. Thus Mike Rigney wrote:

"I got the 5 dols where you got it to send it to me god knos unles Jakman pad for the wood. I put in 20 cords of grene to him at 3 dols and a  $\frac{1}{2}$ . He pad  $\frac{1}{2}$  then and he was to pa the other  $\frac{1}{2}$  when it was dry so he ows 35 dols now unles he pad you I hop he did. I bot a pipe an tobaco with the money an have som left. I am havin' a fin time smokin' an restin' my leg is doin' fin an I wil be abel to walk soon an work. God bles you al boy an Mery Crismus I wish it was mor I could send with love an now no mor from your lovin father

Yours respectfully  
M. Rigney."

The reference to the debt of Jackman for wood was a lead to be followed up. Tim had not known of this asset. Mr. Jackman was one of the leading men of the little settlement. He was Chairman of the school board, and he was supposed to be well off. But he had few friends, for which



fact a reputation for parsimony and close dealing may have been responsible.

Tim went to see him, and came directly to the point. Mr. Jackman, a big, fleshy man with a bull's head and a bull's stare, frowned down at the boy.

"I took that wood to help your father out," he said; "and I paid him at the time what it was agreed that I should pay."

"He says you paid half then," said Tim, "and you was to pay the other half when the wood was dry, and it's dry now."

"I want to see your father about that wood," Mr. Jackman returned.

"What for?" young Tim demanded.

"Because when I came to look at it it didn't measure up. It wasn't piled right."

"Lemme see it," said Tim.

As Mr. Jackman had used most of the wood in question he found this request embarrassing. He frowned at the boy's importunity.

"I'll talk to your father about it," he said with finality. But Tim would not have it that way.

"You know he's in the hospital," he said. "I need some money pretty bad."

"H'm," said Mr. Jackman, scenting a possibility. "Well, as I say, the wood was short measure. That will have to be made up. But I suppose you want some Christmas money, and so I'm willing to give you twenty-five dollars in full payment.

Tim shook his head. "You're owin' thirty-five dollars on it."

"I'll not pay full price for short measure."

"Nobody wants you to," said young Tim. "But," he went on loyally, "dad never gave no short measure. His cords is good cord-n'-a-quarter of what you'd get from some."

"I know what wood I got," Mr. Jackman returned tartly.

"So do I," Tim retorted, his youthful temper beginning to get the better of his awe of the big man. "You got twenty cords, that's what you got. And," he added cogently,



"if you was going to kick on it why didn't you do it when you paid dad half. You're owin' him thirty-five dollars, and I won't take no twenty-five."

"I'll pay no money to an impudent boy," Mr. Jackman snapped. "When your father comes back I'll settle with him."

"All right," said Tim. "But you don't run no dam' short-measure bluffs on me, mister."

"You're an impudent, profane young pup," said Mr. Jackman. "Get to—um—that is, get out of here."

So Tim got out, bitterness in his heart, not so much because he had failed to raise the wind as because of what he knew to be a false accusation against his father.

"The old skin!" he muttered, embellishing the epithet with several improper prefixes. "Tryin' to do us out of ten dollars on that wood. I wouldn't take a cent less nor what he agreed to pay, nor dad won't. And if I was dad I'd larrup the face off of him."

But that financial avenue was closed. The ranch had nothing to sell. He confessed that he was at the end of his resources.

"I can't get nothin' for the kids," he admitted to himself. "But there'll be something for them at the school tree. That'll have to do 'em."

And so when the night arrived he hitched up the old grays to a wagon whose box he had piled with straw, and with his brothers and sister set out for school. Arriving, they wedged themselves modestly into a back row. The anticipations of the younger children ran high. They fixed eager eyes on a curtain made of sheets which hid the glories of the Christmas tree.

Now it so happened that the teacher who had begun the fall term had been taken ill, and another had taken charge only a few weeks before, and she had never heard of the Rigneys. When she saw the strange children in the back seats she came down to them. She was a tall young woman with a wealth of dark hair and a warm friendly smile.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said, "but I don't think I



know you, do I? And I thought I had met almost all the boys and girls."

Tim, on behalf of the tribe, accomplished introductions.

"But why don't you attend school?" When he had told her why, with his customary directness, her eyes sympathized, but a little frown of worry drew a line between them. She left them, and disappeared behind the curtain where Mr. Jackman who in full costume was to impersonate the good Saint Nicholas, was superintending the decking of the tree.

"Mr. Jackman," said the girl, "I've just discovered a family of children named Rigney. They haven't attended school, but they are here to-night."

"Well?" said Mr. Jackman discouragingly.

"Their mother is dead and their father is in the hospital. Somehow I think they are poor. We must put something on the tree for each of them."

"Can't do it," said Mr. Jackman. "Presents this year is confined to and strictly limited to pupils in actual attendance, and brothers and sisters of same too young to attend. That was the resolution we passed unanimous, and them Rigneys don't qualify."

"I know," the girl admitted. "But can't we stretch a point? They expect something, and they'll be so disappointed."

"They got no right to expect," Mr. Jackman returned. "They're a hard lot. That da—er—that eldest boy is a foul-mouthed young tough."

"But he's a boy!" she urged. "Perhaps he hasn't had many opportunities. And—and they're just children, Mr. Jackman, and Christmas means so much to a child."

"Presents was bought with direct reference to that resolution," Mr. Jackman declared with finality, "and there ain't only enough to go round as it is. They're all ticketed and all on the tree. Give 'em to them Rigneys, and some other child it means just as much to will have to go without."

Which was indisputable.

"But your own children are on a visit to their grandparents over the holiday," the girl suggested. "They aren't here to-night. Couldn't we take their presents, Mr. Jack-



man? I—I'd be glad to duplicate them myself as soon as I can—if you'll let me."

Which kindly offer Mr. Jackman turned down cold. His children's presents were not going to them Rigneys if he knew his own mind, and he opined that he did.

"And I'll say here and now," said Mr. Jackman glaring at the rash young woman, "speakin' as Chairman of the board of trustees, that the presents on this tree is going to be confined to the men titled to them by virtue of the resolution we passed, on the faith of which and in accordance with which we collected the funds to buy 'em, and is trustees for that purpose for each and every subscriber."

And that settled it definitely. The Rigneys were out of it.

Unaware of their hard luck they sat through the speeches and the program, congratulating themselves that they bore no part in the latter. Then the curtain slid aside, and the Christmas tree, decked with tinsel streamers and ablaze with colored candles among which hung mysterious, ribbon-tied parcels, was disclosed.

The tree was just a sapling swamped out of the brush. But to these children of Bush Valley it was a glimpse of the fairyland that you and I perhaps saw many years ago; and for those years in which we have accumulated the disillusionment which men in their folly call wisdom, shall never see again, save vicariously, through the eyes of younger generations. But thus, for a moment, we may glimpse it. And so among the fresh, eager faces and shining eyes of the children the worn, lined faces of their elders relaxed, and the Bright Angel that is the Spirit of Youth touched their tired eyes with gentle fingers and bade them look again for an instant with the clear, unwearied vision of the children with whom they sat.

Mr. Jackman perhaps flattered himself that his disguise was impenetrable, but Tim Rigney pierced it at once.

"Him actin' as Santa Claus!—the old devil!" he muttered, and scowled at the shore-going representative of the good saint.

So the distribution went on. Mr. Jackman handed presents to their recipients with what he fondly believed to be



appropriate phrase. He took charge of the packages intended for his own children, and placed them in his pack, which was a gunny sack partially stuffed with waste paper.

Not until the tree was almost bare of its gift fruit did the modest young Rigney begin to experience misgivings.

"Tim!" said one of the twins in a loud whisper.

"Shut up!" said Tim fraternally.

"But, Tim," the other took up the plaint of his fellow, "ain't we goin' to get no presents, Tim?"

"Shut your face and wait!" Tim told them. But in his heart he knew that the worst had happened. There was nothing on that fairy tree for any Rigney. Young Barney began to share this knowledge. His mouth drew down, and a sullen scowl sat on his brow. Tessie's blue eyes shadowed by trouble, more for the others than for herself. And then suddenly it was over. The tree was bare. Santa Claus disappeared in the ante-room to divest himself of his costume.

"To your tents, O Israel!"

Up rose Tim Rigney, and delivered his equivalent.

"Come on, kids! You ain't in it!"

Sternly he shepherded his flock to the door and outside. But down the aisle the tall young teacher who had seen this exodus, came flying, pity in her heart. Outside, in the starlight, she caught him.

"Come back, Tim Rigney," she said.

"No, ma'am," Tim refused.

"But there are things to eat—cake, candy, oranges—all sorts of good things," she pleaded. "Do stay, please!"

"No, ma'am," said Tim, dourly. "We have things to eat to home."

"Oh, Tim,"—her voice carried a suspicion of tears—"I know just how you feel. It happened to me, once—something like it. I want you to stay. Stay with me. Please."

"No, ma'am, thank you," said Tim, minding his manners but firm in his refusal. "We'll be goin'." But suddenly his bitter resentment broke through his stoicism. "He done it out of spite," he said viciously, "the—" and his description of the attributes of the spiteful Jackman made the girl shudder.



"Oh, Tim!" she exclaimed, shocked. "You shouldn't even know such words!"

"My dad would larrup me good if he heard me," Tim admitted contritely. "And you can larrup me," he offered in atonement, "with a strap or a ruler or whatever you like, the first day that school opens. I'll come that day, just for that. You can lay right into me, good."

To this utter amazement and horror, for he would have infinitely preferred a "larruping," she caught him in her strong young arms and kissed him.

"That's all I can give you, Tim," she said; "but it means every good Christmas wish, from the bottom of my heart. I know you won't stay, and I won't urge you—but it wasn't my fault."

"No, ma'am," said Tim. "I know whose fault it was."

He unblanketed the grays, got his charges in the wagon and headed for home. Young Barney was sunk in deep dejection. Tessie was silent and troubled. The twins sniveled and complained.

"Shut up!" Tim told them fiercely. "Don't be babies!"

"They ain't much more, Tim," his sister reminded him.

So Tim shut up himself, and shook the old grays into a stiff, pounding trot. But his spirit was bitter. He brooded as he drove, and suddenly turned to young Barney.

"Think you can drive home and stable the team?"

"Sure," his brother replied confidently.

"Then do it," said Tim. "Go right to bed when you get home. And be careful of the stove drafts. I'm goin' to walk."

"Why, Tim"—Tessie began.

"I said I was goin' to walk," Tim repeated, and cut further questions short by jumping out of the moving wagon. "Keep right on goin'," he commanded. "I'll come home when I feel like it."

But when the wagon had vanished in the night he turned and struck a jog trot toward the school. Arriving there he peered through a window. Refreshments were being served. There was a babel of talk and laughter. Tim Rigney, outcast in the darkness, scowled upon the revelry and made his way



to a rear entrance to the ante-room. There, very much as Mr. Sankey had listened at the bank door, he waited for a moment and cautiously opened it. There was nobody in the room, which was piled with overcoats, caps and outer garments. Among them he saw what he was looking for, the red tunic, false face and beard of Santa Claus, and the bag which the latter had borne. He crossed the room swiftly, satisfied himself that the bag still contained the presents destined for the Jackman children, swung it on his shoulders and disappeared as he had come. Outside he grinned malevolently and struck for home.

For a couple of miles he gloried in his accomplishment. Then doubts began to assail him. Was he getting square with Jackman by swiping his kids' presents?

"Sure, I am," he argued stoutly. "For he'll have to buy them more or see them go shy, an' 'twill hurt the old devil to spend the money. And if he knew us Rigneys had 'em it would drive him wild."

The flaw in this reasoning was that Mr. Jackman might not spend the money to duplicate the gifts; and that he would not know what had become of them. If he did it would be awkward. The last suggestion gave Tim some uneasiness, which grew as he thought it over. It had been his intention to give the Jackman children's presents to his brothers and sister in the morning. But now he realized that this would not do at all.

"He'll raise a row," he reflected, "and maybe he'll catch on, though nobody saw me. And if I give his kids' presents to our kids I can't tell them to keep them hid, and if I don't tell them people will see them. Now what in hell did I ever swipe them for, anyway?"

When he reached home it was in darkness. He went to the stable, lit a lantern, and proceeded to inspect his loot.

Mr. Jackman's presents to his offspring had been chosen with an eye to utility—mittens, gloves, caps—such things in fact as he would have had to buy for them in the ordinary course. There were a couple of highly moral books and diminutive, mosquito-net stockings filled with cheap candies;



but otherwise the frugal Mr. Jackman had capitalized Christmas.

"Why, the rotten, mean, old skunk!" Tim muttered as he replaced them. "There ain't a toy nor a thing a kid wants in the whole works. His kids don't miss much!"

But that did not solve his difficulty. He was clear, now, that he could not give these things to the Rigney children. He would have to get rid of them. After thinking it over he came to the decision that the following night he would make a secret trip to Jackman's and throw the bag and its contents inside his gate. Meanwhile he would cache it.

He ascended the short ladder to the loft above the stable, dug a hole in the hay, deposited the bag and covered it deeply. Having thus concealed the evidence of crime Tim shut the stable, entered the house where his brothers and sister slept, and followed their excellent example.

#### IV

Toward midnight, a rider on a worn and weary cayuse approached the Rigney ranch. Mr. Sankey, though not always merciful to his beast, was a good horseman. He knew what a horse should do; and what even a good one can do only at the cost of exhaustion. The buckskin was good; but since late afternoon he had covered more than fifty miles of bare, frozen ground, without feed and with but brief rests, and he was beginning to go dead on his feet. Twenty-odd miles still intervened between Mr. Sankey and a country in which he would be comparatively safe from pursuit, and though it seemed that he had made a clean getaway he could not be sure of it. Therefore, short of pressing need, it would be folly to ride the buckskin to a showdown. A few hours' rest and a good feed would make the hardy animal as good as new.

Truth to tell, Mr. Sankey himself felt the strain of fifty miles in the saddle, for he was not as young as he had been in the brave days when telephones and telegraphs were few and his business flourished accordingly. When he recognized the Rigney ranch he was willing to rest. He pulled



up to listen for possible hoofbeats behind him, and considered the situation.

After reflection he dismounted, led his weary cayuse to the stable and put him in an empty stall. By the light of a match he discovered a lantern which he lit, coolly filled feed box of oats, and ascending to the loft forked down a feed of hay. A long and misspent life had taught Mr. Sankey that nine times out of ten boldness is the best policy because it is the unexpected one, the run of mankind being predisposed to playing it safe. And for many years Mr. Sankey had made a living by following the very opposite course.

"Even if they've found them bank boys," Mr. Sankey argued to himself, "it'll take 'em some time to fix them cut 'phone wires. And even if they figure I'm headin' for the hills it'll take 'em till daylight to get this far, and by that time I'll be gone. The buckskin will be fresh, while their hosses will be tired. A fed and rested cayuse is plumb good business insurance."

Acting on this reasoning, Mr. Sankey took a single blanket and the sack containing his loot, and ascended to the loft. There he burrowed deeply into the hay, disposed his gun handily in case of need, drew his blanket around him, and with the sack for a pillow relaxed his hardy old limbs in the comfortable feeling that something attempted, something done had earned a few hours' repose.

The stable was tight, the hay warm and comfortable, the sound of animals feeding was soothing. In a few minutes Mr. Sankey slept the sleep common alike to clear and elastic consciences. In his sleep he turned over, and finding his pillow uncomfortable thrust it from him with a somnolent curse deeper into the day. And later he turned over again, so that he faced as he had faced when first he slept.

Long before daylight he awoke, refreshed by several hours' slumber, buckled on his gunbelt and groped in front of him in the darkness for his sack, which he seemed to remember thrusting from him for comfort's sake. He found it deep in the hay, which appeared to have slipped down on it, descended the ladder, saddled his rested cayuse, rolled blanket and sack and tied them to the cantle, mounted and



rode westward in the cold of a bleak morning before dawn, apparently leaving not a trace behind, save a five-dollar bill which he hung on a protruding nail in the stall in which the buckskin had been stabled. In some matters Mr. Sankey was punctilious. Like Robin Hood he robbed the rich; but he would not appropriate so much as a feed of hay from a poor man without paying for it a dozen times over. Besides, experience had taught him that the good will of people along his lines of retreat was worth the money. Mr. Sankey considered that, bar accidents, he had got away with it! and so he rode on into the hills and rides out of this story.

On Christmas morning Tim Rigney went down to the stable. There are times when the human being turns to the companionship of dumb animals with relief. For Tim this was such a time. He could not give his own kind any Christmas gifts, but he could give the stock an extra feed. There was a certain satisfaction in that. But it was a rotten Christmas—dead rotten!

As he went about his stable chores he saw that the empty stall next to the grays bore signs of recent occupancy. That was funny. And then, at the head of the stall above the manger, he saw a greenish bit of paper hanging from a nail head. When he took it down it proved to be a five-dollar bill.

Tim looked at it, turned it over, and shook his head. Apart from the occupancy of the stall there was no explanation of this phenomenon. It looked as though some one was paying for stabling. But who would pay five dollars for a feed of oats and a manger of hay?

The denomination of the bill gave him an idea. That old guy with the buckskin—Mr. Sankey with customary caution had omitted to introduce himself, and Tim with true Western politeness had not asked his name—who had stayed overnight had left five dollars. Had he come back? But if he had, why hadn't he come to the house?"

Tim had no explanation of that. The old bird must be mighty rich. But, darn it, if he, Tim, had had that five dollars yesterday what a difference it would have made! Then



he could have got a few things for the kids, and he would not have cared a hoot about Jackman and the tree.

He put the bill in his pocket and left the stable. As he emerged he heard the rolling drum of hoofs on frozen earth. Evidently somebody was in a hurry. As rider and horse came into view Tim recognized the police uniform, and the big, slashing bay that was the mount of his friend Sam Hake.

For the first time Tim was not pleased to see him. What was he doing riding that way so early Christmas morning? He thought of Jackman and the sack in the hay, and he felt an odd, cold sensation in the pit of his stomach.

As big horse and straight-backed rider swept down on the ranch, Tim saw that both were organized for business. The policeman was clad for a cold ride, and he had a carbine in a saddle bucket and a compact roll on his saddle. At sight of the boy he checked his pace and pulled up beside the corral bars, beckoning to him.

"Come on, Tim, I want to talk to you!"

"Merry Christmas, Mr. Hake," said Tim, trying to conceal his uneasiness.

"Who said so?" Hake responded; for to be turned out on a cold Christmas morning on what has every indication of a wild goose chase sweetens no man's temper. He had just been notified of the hold-up over a 'phone line that had been cut in a couple of widely separated places; and he had a most inadequate description of the hold-up himself, who might or might not be heading for the hills. "But thanks, Tim," he hastened to add, "and the same to you. Now, look here: Did you see anybody on the trail this morning?"

"No, sir."

"Hear anybody go by late last night?"

"No, sir."

"What time did you go to bed?"

"About—about half past ten."

"Up late, weren't you? At that shine at the school house?"

"Yes, sir."

"On your way home, did you happen to see anything of a fellow packing a gunny sack and heading this way?"

Hake asked the question jocularly; but Tim found it an



accusation. The policeman knew all about it, and was merely playing with him as a big cat plays with a miserable little mouse. There was no use lying. When the mounties go after a fellow they get him, and that was all there was to it.

"Y—yes, sir," he faltered.

"What!" Hake exclaimed sharply. "Why didn't you say so before? What's the matter with you? Come through with every darn' thing you know. And hurry up."

"I'll get it for you," said Tim.

"You'll get it for me! What the devil do you mean?"

"I'll get you the sack and—all," Tim told him. "It's all there. I was afraid to give it to the kids, and I cached it in the hay. But I was going to take it back to-night, honest, I was."

"Do you mean to tell me," the policeman demanded incredulously, "that you found this gunny sack and its contents?"

"No, sir," said Tim, determined to make a clean breast of it. "I took it myself."

"You—what!" Hake exclaimed.

"I took it while Jackman was in the school room," Tim explained.

"Jackman!" the policeman ejaculated. "What has he to do with it?"

"It was his, of course," said Tim wonderingly.

"His?" Hake repeated. "Pshaw! Jackman hasn't the nerve—where is this sack now?"

"In the hay loft."

"Come on and get it," Hake ordered, swinging down from his horse.

Tom groped for some minutes in the hay before he dragged the sack out.

"That's funny," he said, regarding it. "It don't seem"—

But Hake, seizing it, cut the string that bound its mouth and dumped its contents on the loft floor.

"By the Lord Harry!" he said as he stared at a mass of currency loose and in flat packages, mingled with checks, notes, money orders and securities negotiable and otherwise, "the kid is telling the truth. You're sure, are you," he said



to Tim, "that Jackman had this sack in his possession? You took it from him, did you? Remember, you'll have to swear to it."

"But that ain't Jackman's sack at all!" cried the pop-eyed Tim.

It took some questioning before Hake got the straight of it, and then told Tim of the bank robbery.

"This is the bank loot, no doubt of it," he said. "Now, how did it get here?"

"I dunno," said Tim. "But somebody stabled a horse here last night, and he left a five-dollar bill."

"Have you any idea who it was?"

Tim with some reluctance told him of the visit of the generous old man on the buckskin pony with the loose shoe, and under questioning furnished a description of both, though he volunteered no information on these points. At Hake's orders he brought a hay fork, and they investigated the loft thoroughly. They found no other sack. The policeman chuckled.

"From the look of things this hold-up came here in the night, stabled and fed his horse, and slept in your hay. He was a nervy bird, all right. And then, after doing all that, somehow he picked up the wrong sack in the dark—switched them himself. Tim, I'd give a lot to see his face when he finds out that he's held up a bank for a few kids' Christmas presents."

"Maybe he'll come back," Tim suggested.

"Not a chance. He won't find out his mistake till he opens that sack somewhere back in the hills. Then he'll dope it out that the sack of presents was cached in the hay for Christmas morning, and that his sack will be found instead. This is apt to be a good night's work for you, son."

"Me?" said Tim. "All I done was to swipe Jackman's sack. I thought you'd come to arrest me for that."

"Forget Jackman's sack," said Hake. "I'll explain that, and you needn't tell anybody. But the bank will give you a reward for finding this money. There's a lot of value here, Tim."



"How much will I get?" the practical Tim asked.

"I don't know. Perhaps five hundred. Maybe more."

"Gosh!" Tim breathed in awe.

The policeman swung up on his big bay, the sack on the saddle in front of him like a bucking roll.

"I want it where I can see it," he said. "I'll have to take it in. The hold-up has a good start, and likely he's in the hills by this time. I couldn't catch him. But we'll get him yet."

"I hope you don't," Tim said unexpectedly.

"Why?" the policeman asked in surprise.

"Well," said the boy, arranging his thoughts slowly, "maybe he's a hold-up"—

"He is," said Hake. "If he's the man I think he is, he's an old wolf—as hard a proposition as ever packed a gun. And you hope we don't get him. Why, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Maybe I ought," Tim admitted, "but I ain't. I hope you don't get him. He was white to us. And he was the only darn' Santa Claus we had."



## XVI

### More Stately Mansions

By SAMUEL MERWIN

*Nominated by* KARL E. HARRIMAN, *Red Book*

#### I

He needn't have gone out into the hall to meet the postman. His sister sighed. They hadn't spoken of the matter. Horace said so little. He had always been gently patient, but the long silent moods had come recently. She heard his voice out there in a kindly good morning.

He didn't return directly to the dining room, but first slipped across the hall to his own bedroom. She couldn't help seeing the long envelope in his hand but didn't see him hide it in the satchel in his closet. She was already gathering up their few breakfast dishes. He had remarked of late, quite cheerfully, that the light diet helped his asthma. He came quietly in from his room and gave her a letter with the familiar Iowa postmark. She felt with a pang how thin he was. And how he had let himself run down. He hadn't been to the barber shop for nearly two months, and the abundant hair curled against his coat collar. His beard, too, which he had kept neatly trimmed even during the difficult years since he had had to surrender his pastorate, was whitely shaggy now. He looked like a somewhat unkempt Mr. Longfellow. Her eyes noted the spots on his coat. Shortly he would be going out for his morning walk. He hadn't yet given that up. His health, indeed, was better. That they owed to this radiant dry sunshine. And it was a great deal. Even living over a store here in the western



outskirts of Los Angeles, without the song birds she had studied and loved, without the green lanes and the companionship of life-long friends, they had much to be thankful for.

She said, "I sponged off your other coat, Horace."

"Oh," said he, "thank you, Alice"; and turned in his deliberate way toward the door. But with a quick, "I'll get it!" she slipped past him. Surely it would do him good to spruce up a little. Even if every penny. . . . Something would surely come in. It would *have* to. They couldn't go on indefinitely like this. They could ask for nothing more back home, of course. The parish had been so generous. But something would come. Something always had.

She got the coat from his closet and took it to her own room. She usually did that in order to put in the tail pocket the handkerchief she had washed in the kitchenette and dried overnight and pressed with the electric iron. For years she had attended to these little personal matters. He forgot things so. It occurred to her that she would have to be more careful about the electricity. Last month's bill wasn't paid. There was a way of pressing a handkerchief against the window glass and letting it dry there. She might try that.

She hurriedly took a dollar note from her lean purse and placed it in the pocket, on the handkerchief where he would surely feel it when he reached in there. So that he wouldn't carelessly draw it out with the handkerchief and lose it. That wouldn't do. She felt guilty. Until lately they had been frank about everything. In the breast pocket she put his small Testament. He liked to have the book by him. Sometimes he read it, seated in the park. It was, she recalled, the revised version. Horace had taken up the cudgels for that small revolution at a time when to do so required courage.

She helped him on with the coat, and then said—"Horace, do drop in at a barber shop. You're getting positively shaggy." She contrived to be almost bright about that. And he gave her a patient smile that she found heartbreaking and



went out. She went to the front window to watch him cross the street. There were so many automobiles.

She washed the dishes and swiftly made the two beds. Her thoughts were reaching out. She hadn't made a decision for fifteen years, and felt somewhat frightened now at the need. But she had courage. He had been gone but little more than a half-hour when she put on her old straw hat with the daisies on it and caught the trolley for Pasadena. Mrs. John P. Stanton was stopping at one of the overpoweringly magnificent hotels there. Her heart fluttered with excitement. Mrs. Stanton had raised the fund among the older parishioners that enabled Horace and herself to make this amazing journey halfway across the continent into the unfailing sunshine and the stir and bustle of a brisk young country. . . . California seemed like another country . . . where the mountain-tops stood boldly, beautifully white in the blue. Mrs. Stanton had called, too, since her arrival, in a limousine with purple upholstery that she apparently hired by the week.

She had to nerve herself up to it. But the younger woman was kind. "Perhaps we have been extravagant," she heard herself rather breathlessly exclaiming, "but it cost so much to make the trip, and get settled, and since then the Christian Tribune has been sending back Horace's articles. I'm afraid he's out of touch, a little. I'm afraid people don't want to read exegesis. Even people in the church. He doesn't tell me, but I've seen the postman give them to him. And there hasn't been a check for a long time."

Mrs. Stanton murmured something. She was sorry. At the same time she found the situation puzzling. She could hardly undertake personally the support of this quaint couple. She was a stout but energetic woman, and now thought quickly. Something she would undoubtedly have to do. The old parish in Crockettville thought the world of Horace Bancroft. Her own father, for all his hardheadedness, had loved him. She remembered that.

"Of course we can't accept more help." The sweet-spirited little woman was talking excitedly on, a nervous light in the childlike blue eyes. "The people at home have been more



than wonderful. Horace has been doing his best, too. He works for hours every day. I'm sometimes afraid he . . . this is what I've thought, Mrs. Stanton. I used to teach. And I was librarian at Crochettville, you know. I've been wondering if I couldn't find some work that. . . ."

"It occurs to me," remarked Mrs. Stanton, pouncing on the thought with much of her father's crisp energy, "that Fred might help us to work something out."

"Oh, is Fred." . . . Alice reflected that Fred was the son. He had gone West years back.

"He is in Hollywood, yes. We came partly to see him. He is interested in one of the big producing companies."

"Oh," faltered Alice, "motion pictures. . . ."

Mrs. Stanton nodded briskly. "They have libraries, you know. A great deal of research work."

"Oh" . . . came again from the confused Alice. The thought of the picture industry brought a new tremor to her overtaxed nerves. Horace would never approve of that. Before he gave up the pastorate he had preached against the sensational advertising on the fences of Main Street. And a public committee had been formed because of some trouble about young girls in those dim places. She had herself seen only a few educational films that had been shown at the assembly hall of the high school. And once she had attended a Burton Holmes lecture. But she knew a little of the feeling out here, in Los Angeles and Pasadena. People were quiet about it, but Hollywood with its queer inhabitants and its exotic ways they had shut out of their world with walls of massive moral masonry. Mrs. Stanton, as a casual hotel guest, couldn't have felt that. It was deeply perplexing. What could she say?

"We'll run right over there," said Mrs. Stanton, rising. "I'll have the car brought around."

Accordingly the bewildered Alice Bancroft found herself whirled over to Hollywood and ushered into a luxurious office. Through a window she glimpsed tall glass roofs and house fronts that were only scaffolding behind and strangely garbed men and dangerously beautiful painted women. Fred Stanton she remembered. He was more than kind. He even



rubbed out his cigarette in a bronze ash tray. They took her to a library where a few quiet women were at desks and shelves were filled with books on costume and architecture and foreign lands.

She was engaged, to report at nine o'clock in the morning. A salary was mentioned. It seemed a good deal. She felt wicked and bold, but knew that she was going on. What else was there to do? Perhaps somehow good would come out of it. She hoped so. She wished she could catch her breath.

Mrs. Stanton dropped her at the apartment. Thinking desperately all the way, she finally said, picking her words with timid care—"I can't express my . . ."

"It's nothing, dear. Really I'm delighted that it has worked out so easily."

"But . . ."

Mrs. Stanton turned.

"Please don't mind if I . . . Horace, you know, has felt rather strongly against these things."

"Oh! Oh, of course."

"I think perhaps it would be better. . . ." At last she came out bravely with it . . . "I've never deceived Horace. Never before. But I do so want these last years to be . . . happy . . . I'm not going to tell him. Even if it doesn't seem quite honest. I'm only going to say it is work in a library."

"Of course it is just that." Mrs. Stanton felt something of the dismay that an unworldly child can stir in the sophisticated adult breast.

"Yes, in a way," mused Alice doubtfully. But her native bravery asserted itself. Her own little life didn't matter. It never had mattered. "Horace mustn't know," she said.

Mrs. Stanton said that they were running up to Santa Barbara, Monterey and San Francisco. But they'd be back within a few weeks.

## II

Horace Bancroft walked slowly to the park. Children were playing there, and he smiled. But as he moved on



to a bench near the water the smile faded. Four articles in succession the *Christian Tribune* had returned. Dr. Waterman had sent a personal and kindly letter with this last one. There had been time for a glance over it before he put the long envelope in the tin box on the closet shelf. It seemed that he had drifted in some way out of touch. It was puzzling. Just how Alice and he were to go on living wasn't clear. They might be put out of their rooms. They might, of course, starve. He didn't mind for himself. His active life was over, and his friends waited in the beckoning beyond. But Alice. . . .

Was his faith weakening? He felt for the Testament and read the Sermon on the Mount. Then he gazed up into the baldly luminous sky and repeated softly a line from one of the New England poets whose calm spirit had pervaded hundreds of his gentle sermons during his active years—"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul!"

He got up and felt in his tail pocket for the handkerchief that should be there. His fingers encountered an unfamiliar fabric. He examined it . . . a dollar note, creased and soiled from much handling. He found difficulty in understanding. Could Alice have put it there? She must have. And she wanted him to go to the barber shop.

He considered this, walking uncertainly up the path toward Seventh Street. It seemed extravagant. Yet Alice might be right. It would hearten her to see him better groomed. Those habits while they might appear trivial, did have a value. But he was perplexed. Even as he turned from the path to the sidewalk he was undecided. To return the money without a word would hurt her. She had made the step, and always he had leaned on her judgment in practical matters.

A creamy yellow roadster turned from Seventh Street into a filling station. The driver, a slender dark young man, with a soft hat turned down at one side and a poetical bow tie, stepped out, and saying absently, "Ten gallons, please—and you might look at the oil gauge," reached into the car and took from the seat a Bible bound in soft leather, opened to the Old Testament and hurriedly turned the leaves. While the man



cranked the gasoline pump he read intently; then, mumbling a phrase, looked up. And then he stared.

Approaching along the sidewalk came a tall spare figure of a man, clad in an old black frock coat, of a fashion seldom seen nowadays, black trousers and an old straw hat. The white hair curled about his collar. The white beard was full and venerable. The nose was long and firm, the skin of cheeks and temples white and fine as parchment. He moved slowly, with dignity, carrying a little book and reading as he walked.

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, with a nervous quickness. "I should like to speak with you."

The old man stopped in mild surprise, and then smiled.

"I am wondering if you would ride a little way with me."

The patient eyes were looking at the familiar book in the hands of the young stranger.

"I am Sylvester Drake." He watched for the effect of the announcement; but there was none, merely a courteous attention. He was plainly taken aback. That name was known in every smallest city of Europe, in Africa, Australia, Japan, Borneo, South America, wherever motion pictures were shown. The simple phrase, "A Sylvester Drake production" in shining letters on the screen spelled the magic of success to the races of the whole world, and yet this kindly old man didn't know. It was disturbing. It was very nearly incredible.

"I put in two quarts of oil," said the man of the pump. Drake passed over a twenty dollar bill and carelessly thrust the change into his pocket.

"It is important that we should have a little talk, sir, if you can spare the time."

"Why . . . why certainly," replied the old man, in some hesitation. His speech indicated a rare simplicity of character. "I was only going to the barber shop."

"Oh, you mustn't do that. I'll run you over to my studio. We can talk there."

So they drove westward to a vast fenced-in area where were white buildings and between them plots of painfully nurtured green and climbing roses. Young Mr. Drake led



the way to a charmingly furnished room with a desk in it and then spoke softly but with that nervous quickness into a telephone.

"I've something to show you," he said. He had placed the Bible on the desk and now rested a hand on it. "The greatest book in the world," he said. He appeared somewhat excited. "I believe it is our duty to bring it back into the heart of the world. And how can that be done better than through the films."

A young woman appeared with a robe, a turban and sandals that Mr. Bancroft regarded with surprise and interest. This Mr. Drake was a disarming young man, engagingly enthusiastic yet apparently stirred by serious purpose.

"The costume of the Prophet Isaiah," he explained, eagerly. The young woman withdrew. "And now I have an unusual request to make of you, sir. Would you be so good as to put it on?"

Mr. Bancroft did not reply, merely looked. The situation was moving rather more rapidly than he could think.

"I think, sir, it is in your power to help in the great work I have undertaken."

After all, there could be no great harm in putting on the costume of Isaiah. It was all rather bewildering. The young man drew out a screen about a chair in a corner of the room, and there Mr. Bancroft removed his outer clothing and donned the robe and sandals of the prophet.

"Now if you don't mind, I want to photograph you. Just come this way. I'm sorry, but I didn't catch your name."

"Horace Bancroft." The simple submissive dignity of the old man was touched with beauty. Drake felt it, and responded as a chameleon responds to color. His eye rested on the little book that lay on a chair beside the old straw hat, and now he saw the words, "The New Testament." He saw, too, that it was bound in boards of polished yellow-brown wood.

"That is a very unusual binding, sir."

"Yes, Bishop Cammitt brought it as a gift from the Holy Land nearly forty years ago. It is wood from the Mount of Olives."



"You are a clergyman, sir?"

Mr. Bancroft inclined his head, gravely.

"My picture is to be called 'Isaiah.' I intend to show the warfare between Hezekiah and Sennacherib, and the fall of Babylon. There will be modern scenes, as well. Civilization, as you have seen better than I, is crumbling about us. It is an age of materialism, of lawlessness, of corruption and disintegration. The church no longer guides. There is no faith, and without faith how can the people live on the earth? Babylon stands today. Babylon is New York. I plan to show New York destroyed as Babylon was destroyed. A prophet must arise, an Isaiah of the moderns. Will you come this way, sir?"

He opened the door. They were to go to some one of the other buildings. Strange appearing young people moved about in the sunshine. Motion pictures! Still there could be no harm in this. He followed.

A beautiful young woman in a trim suit was crossing an area-way, leading a little girl. With a quick, "Excuse me one moment," Drake went to her.

She raised her curving eyebrows. "Isaiah, Sylvie?"

He nodded. "Be careful, though, Sybil. He's a child. Hasn't an idea what's happening to him."

"What did you think I'd do—kick his turban off? He's wonderful."

"I'm going to make a quick test. He'd never heard of me. Think of that?"

"My word!"

"Come over here. I'll introduce him."

"Wait a minute, Sylvie." She turned away from the child and lowered her voice. "I'm still wondering why you didn't call up last night. I waited."

"Simply couldn't. Awfully busy."

"I know all that. But——"

"Not now, dear! See you tonight. We'll run into the Ambassador for dinner. Come over here. . . . Dr. Bancroft, I want to make you acquainted with Miss Sybil Strange. Miss Strange is to play the woman of Babylon in 'Isaiah.'"



A confused memory arose back of the patient eyes. Horace Bancroft had somewhere heard that name. A picture came, indistinctly . . . a provocative young woman on a glaring red poster, wearing almost no clothing. They had had it removed from every billboard in Crockettville.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," said the quiet young woman. "This is my little girl. Come here, Dorothy!" The child curtsied charmingly. As he followed the curiously nervous and eager young man into a spacious dim interior Mr. Bancroft passed a thin hand across his eyes.

They put paint on his face, above the beard. He made no protest. He seemed to have been swept along past the point where objections would be fitting. Glass tubes in frames suddenly flared with a blinding light. Three young men in leather puttees turned cameras on him and ground at handles. He had to stand, move about in a narrow space, lift his hands, speak.

Back in the studio Drake said, "I'm going to ask you if you won't be so good as to wait and have lunch with me. They'll have a print ready within a couple of hours. I want to show you what we've got."

It seemed to Mr. Bancroft that he should get word to Alice. Though that would be difficult. There was no telephone in the apartment. A telegram would frighten her. At that, it would be difficult to frame the message. He had time to think now. He was in a motion picture studio. He had been photographed in a costume and with theatrical paint on his face. It was distressing. Come to think of it, he had already been away longer than ever before. It might be difficult to explain on any terms. He had never had a secret from Alice. Unhappiness filled his heart, and silenced him as he sat in the crowded, noisy restaurant of the studio.

After lunch he sat in a dark room with a number of swarthy men to whom Mr. Drake introduced him but with whom he found it impossible to have speech. Keen young men, out of some strange world. Europeans, he felt. A white screen covered the wall at the farther end of the room. Through a square opening in the other wall, behind him, a shaft of white light shot forth and a machine began



clicking. Then on the screen a slender biblical figure appeared, a stately personage with a shaggy noble head. Could it be himself? One of the swarthy men spoke approvingly. Another nodded. Young Mr. Drake spoke with them in suppressed excitement. There was something amazing about the experience, something that stirred the pulse.

"Now, Dr. Bancroft," began Drake . . . this back in his richly furnished office.

"Really, if you will pardon me, I have never been made a doctor of divinity. My pastorate was an obscure one."

"Oh, I'm sorry. But you saw what I saw. The actual prophet Isaiah appeared there on the screen and spoke to me. No professional actor could give the quality I felt from you there. I feel that you were sent to me. Mr. Kerdok, our director of production, feels even more strongly about it. He says that you *are* Isaiah. By this time he has already instructed Elliott Kirby, whom we brought out from New York for the part, to take the train back. You shall be my Isaiah!"

Mr. Bancroft gazed at him without a word.

"I realize that I cannot go on a step without you. The company will be glad to satisfy you in the matter of salary. There will be at least four months' employment, perhaps double that. May I ask if a hundred dollars a week would be satisfactory?"

The faded eyes were fixed on him. But the face exhibited no trace of expression.

"Of course you understand that it is to be a magnificent production. It will cost at least half a million dollars. At least that."

Still no answer came. And still those eyes rested on him. He stirred nervously, and suddenly cried out, bringing a hand down sharply on the desk—"Two hundred, then! Two hundred a week! Naturally we can't overlook the fact that your name has no value to us. It isn't as it would be if you were an established actor. I'm sure you will understand that. . . . Well, I will say two hundred and fifty. I'm afraid we can't do more than that."



"I really couldn't permit my name to be used," said Mr. Bancroft at last, in a weak voice. His heart was beating again. But he was frightened. All he could think of was Alice, how wonderfully easy it would make everything for her.

"That won't matter. We'll find a name for you. If you wouldn't mind stepping down to the cashier's office I'll have a check made out to bind the bargain. And while we're there we'll look over the contract and sign it. Yes, I'm sure Mr. Kerdok would be glad to offer you a preliminary week's salary just as an earnest of good faith. But you must, you really must, keep away from barber shops. You can see why. That wonderful hair and beard mustn't be touched, except to keep it as it is now."

"I . . . I'm not sure that I could use a check . . ."

"Oh, they'll be glad to cash it for you. It'll only be necessary to write your name on the back. We'll fix it up right now. And come in the morning at nine."

### III

Alice cooked up a little chipped beef in cream for luncheon, and made toast. For dessert she had stewed pears. But Horace had not come in. She left the food on the stove and went anxiously to the front window. The automobiles dashed endlessly, recklessly by. Something must have happened. The situation was difficult enough without this added worry. For two hours she had been nerving herself to utter her first deliberate white lie; but if her nerves were to be tried much longer she'd be too upset to contrive anything. One o'clock passed. Half-past one. The creamed beef was thickening into a paste on the stove. At two she added hot water, put on her hat, and went fearfully down to the street. She even hurried over to the park and sought the gardener. He thought he had seen that elderly gentleman who always read on a bench, but wasn't sure. It would have been early in the morning, anyway. Returning to the apartment she found no sign of him. Then it was that she ran down to the drug store and telephoned the police. They



had no word of an accident to an elderly gentleman with a beard, but they took the name. She was in tears now. She could only climb the stairs again and sit on the edge of a chair in the window.

Nearly an hour passed, and then she saw him; saw the shaggy white beard and the curling long hair. He was all right. But he hadn't gone to the barber shop. He walked with his usual grave dignity. Probably he had met an old friend, and naturally couldn't telephone. She pressed a hand over her fluttering heart. Once again she must nerve herself. She went to the kitchen, put more hot water in the creamed beef and started two fresh pieces of toast. That was all right; she could use the others in bread pudding. He liked bread pudding. If only her pulse would quiet down! Somehow she must contrive to carry it off. What she had determined to do was wholly for him. And Mrs. Stanton saw nothing wrong in it. Though of course Mrs. Stanton hadn't caught that feeling against Hollywood among the better people of Los Angeles and especially of Pasadena.

"You're all right?" she called from the tiny kitchen.

"Oh, yes, Alice. Quite." Was she wrong in thinking his voice a thought unnatural? Perhaps it was her own dismay that colored all about her.

"You didn't go to the barber shop, dear?"

"No . . . No." That was all he said. Perhaps he hadn't found the dollar note.

They sat on either side of the table in the front room that served as parlor by day and her bedroom at night. She had supposed that they would break at once into talk. But they didn't. He was soberly eating. Something was the matter. But she mustn't let this sense of a clouded understanding depress her. She must carry it off. Impulsively she looked up and cried—"Horace dear, I have something to. . . ."

She faltered at that point because he had chosen the same moment to lower his fork and say—"Alice, there is something that I . . ."

She laughed right out, all overstrung nerves. But he waited with a frightened expression for her to continue.

"It's really great news, Horace. I've got a job. A real



one, with a fine salary. It's in a . . . a library." She was watching his face. He'd never press her with questions. It would be all right if she just didn't say too much. She simply mustn't give him an opportunity to disapprove. Not with their very lives at stake. "Like my old work in the Crichtonville Free Public only even more interesting. I'm really very happy about it. Don't you see, Horace, we won't have to worry at all about the checks from Chicago. When they do come they'll be just that much extra. And oh Horace, what pleases me most is that now we can do some of those interesting things . . . take the railroad up the mountain and ride in the cars down to Santa Monica and maybe some Sunday even see Santa Barbara. And we can keep up our clothes. You know you need shirts. And we're going to have your hair and beard trimmed and spruce you all up. The only thing that worries me is having to leave you alone here all day. And your lunches. I'm not going to have you picking up cold indigestible things."

Her enthusiasm, at first seeming almost real to herself, was fading out. It would have helped if he had shown even a little responsive interest. But he didn't show any; he simply sat. So she bustled out to the kitchenette to get the stewed pears. She simply had to break out into some sort of activity. She was, at heart . . . she told herself this excitedly . . . a liar. It almost seemed as if he suspected her.

She moved toward the corridor. There he was with his straw hat on actually slipping out the door. His face was nearly as white as his beard. To her startled glance he said a few low words, something about being back directly.

In about ten minutes he returned, wearily. There were pink spots on his temples and a hunted look in his eyes. She indicated the stewed pears, but he wearily waved aside all thought of food.

"I telephoned," . . . he said, but then stopped short. He was standing in the doorway, steadying himself with a lean white hand. Patiently, laboriously, he seemed to be trying to think out a baffling problem. The pink spots deepened in color. Drops of sweat appeared on his nobly chiseled forehead. Alice felt as if she were sinking in her chair. It



was terrible to witness his anguish. She was on the point of crying out her whole pathetic little adventure when at last he spoke; in resignation, with a dismissive finality that was the strongest note in the man.

"Alice, my dear, I find myself committed to a course that deeply puzzles me. The truth would hurt you. I will for the present spare you that. I am beginning to see that in times of somewhat abnormal pressure and concern the judgment may become so warped as to lead one into strange byways. Your announcement makes my present course appear, for the moment, unnecessary. I have made the effort to extricate myself from this predicament, but find that it is too late. I won't speak soon again of this. It is too painful. It is, indeed, unbelievable. But however strange my course may for the time seem to you, I must ask you to trust in my integrity."

With which he left her and shut himself in his room. She heard the closet door open and then a snap as he shut his satchel. He would have put something else away there, along with the rejected manuscripts. Then a chair creaked, and she knew that he was lowering himself to his knees. She even heard the faint droning sound of it, for he couldn't quite pray in silence. Habit was too strong.

#### IV

Mrs. Stanton's few weeks along the more northerly coast lengthened into as many months. She wrote once or twice to Alice Bancroft, and received pleasantly grateful replies. At the time of the second letter Alice appeared to be absorbed in a study of the costume and household customs current in France at the time of the Children's Crusade. Indeed her interest had so sprightly a quality that her appearance when the opportunity finally came to make an evening call at the Pasadena Hotel was rather disturbing. She was thinner, and wore a look of strain about the blue eyes.

"I seem to be always bringing my troubles to you, Mrs. Stanton. But I've been so bewildered. Things were never like this before. It's . . . well, Horace."



"He isn't ill?"

"No. Not now. No, in health he's better. There was one attack . . . intense pain in his eyes . . . he had to be kept in a dark room for days; I thought he was going blind . . . but still it isn't that. His life has taken a direction that I can't understand at all. He has been very unhappy about it. For a time he seemed crushed. But lately\* has been a little more his old self. He won't talk."

"Why don't you ask him? Straight out. Usually it is best to be frank and human about things."

Alice's lids fluttered. "We've never questioned each other. And he did speak pretty plainly once. He said it was a predicament, and asked me to have faith in him. I had to accept that. But I can't tell you what I've been living through. The worry and dread. The consciousness that there is something definite and unpleasant between us. A difficulty. Every day we grow more silent and evasive. And he won't cut his hair or trim his beard. He looks awful. He goes away early every morning and doesn't come home until nearly six at night. Sometimes he isn't in when I get home. He even stays out evenings. Once he didn't come in until two o'clock in the morning. I was frightened. Of course you know . . . I get pretty confused trying to think this out . . . but do you suppose any great change ever comes to a man at Horace's time of life . . . in character, I mean? I've heard that men a little younger. . . ."

"Of course, in the forties and fifties men do sometimes . . . well . . ." Mrs. Stanton paused, and for the moment her eyes gazed past Alice's hat and her mouth set rather firmly.

"Do you think it possible that he . . . well, that influences might have come unexpectedly into his life that would make him act . . . well, not quite wisely . . . of course I can't imagine that it could be . . . well, women . . . sometimes we have to face these things . . . I've heard that the atmosphere here, especially near Hollywood, does undermine the moral tone of the most surprising people."

"Oh, my dear, no! Not Horace Bancroft! How could you ever think such a thing?"



"Well . . . it seems dreadful . . . but I've worried. And lately there has been an odor, a perfume . . ."

"Not about his clothing?"

Alice nodded unhappily. "And the night he was out so late he had . . . I may as well tell it all now . . . he had powder on the shoulder of his coat. I found it there in the morning. A pinkish powder. I simply haven't known what to think. It's pretty hard to sleep at night. My thoughts just go round and round. It's perfectly bewildering."

"Did you leave him at home this evening?"

"Oh, no! That's another thing? He's gone away. It will be a week Monday. It's the third time, but this is the longest. No address. He might die and I wouldn't know. Mrs. Stanton, he's seventy-one! He needs me. You see, I'm only sixty, and strong."

"But you say he's been in better health lately."

"Since that dreadful eye trouble, yes."

A look of shrewd understanding was creeping into Mrs. Stanton's clear eyes.

"My dear," she said, very kindly, laying a hand on the thin arm beside her. "I'll wager somebody knows exactly where he is and where you are, in case of any trouble."

"Well, of course . . . God," said Alice, simply.

"I don't mean God," remarked Mrs. Stanton.

## V

The "Isaiah" company was on location in the Mojave desert. There an immense if flimsy Babylon reared its painted walls and its hanging gardens high toward a staring heaven. Some twelve hundred persons were camped about in houses, huts and tents. Arab horses were tethered by the hundred under canvas. Scores of tattered camels lay humped upon the sand munching in placid disdain. Already, at eight-thirty in the morning, the camp bustled with activity. Syrians and Babylonians were passing to and from the eating hut. Spearheads and scimitars glinted in the sun. Camera men in rakish caps hurried about. Assistant directors consulted notebooks. Carpenters and property men



moved deliberately in the direction of the sets, chatting and picking their teeth. Continuity writers and violinists waited, over near the big set.

In the main hut near the eating house Sylvester Drake sat bowed over his solitary coffee, head on hands. A much-thumbed script lay on the table beside the cup. From time to time he turned the last few pages over and back, muttering intently. At a knock he glanced wearily up and called—"Come in!"

Sybil Strange, already costumed and made up, opened the door and slipped within.

"Oh, say, Syb, you shouldn't come in here!"

"Listen, Sylvie . . ."

"But damn it, if you're seen coming out of here in the morning . . . and you will be seen . . ."

"It's all right. Dr. Southern knows I've come for you. Aren't you going to say good morning?"

"Well, yes, of course. But . . ."

"Careful of my make-up! . . . Listen, Sylvie, I've been in to see him."

"He isn't dead, then?"

"No. He isn't dead. He's flat, of course. Reading his funny little Testament, though. He wants to see you. And the doctor thought you'd better come."

"Of course it had to happen this way. Why, I could finish up with him in two days more. We'd be all set. And he has to go and get a sunstroke. My God, I could weep!"

"It wasn't a sunstroke. It's heat exhaustion. The doctor says there's a difference. His pulse is strong. And he hasn't much fever. He's awfully weak, of course. And he's been pretty ill. The only danger is his age."

"His age? I know, but he's at least a hundred and six!"

"No, seventy-one. And wonderfully well preserved. He's never drunk anything, you see, or even smoked. Of course, it's true that he may die. The whole thing has been a strain for him. Sylvie, I was with him all night."

"Now look here, kid, you know you shouldn't do that. You're all in yourself. I'm all in, for that matter. Oh, Lord, why did I ever go into pictures! It'll kill me yet. Tell you



one thing, Syb, if we ever do finish this job and get any sort of a picture, we'll run up to Frisco in the car, you and I, and put in one awful week. I'm for crime, myself."

The beautiful young woman knit her brows in a puzzled manner. "Perhaps," she said softly.

"Perhaps nothing! It's a date."

"You'd better come, Sylvie."

"What does he want? Witnesses for his will? He can't play Isaiah, can he? Looks like total wreckage to me. Oh, I'll bluff it through somehow, of course. Maybe I'll put whiskers and a wig on Ernie Schoolcraft and wind up with a soft-focus long shot. But the final close-up will be gone. And his big scene with you and Jim Hanley. Gone! All gone! Without that beautiful stern face! You see, dear, I was going to iris out on . . ."

Miss Strange stamped a small foot. "Please come, Sylvie!"

"You slip out first. I'll come along in a minute."

"No, I don't feel like sneaking around."

"What's come over you, anyway, Syb?"

"Nothing, but . . . Oh, I don't care how it looks. Come on with me."

They found the venerable man propped up on pillows on his cot. The wood-bound Testament was in his hand. He had slipped a finger within it to mark his place. Dr. Southern bowed quietly, stepped aside for them and then moved out into the glare of the desert sun just beyond the doorway.

Drake stood over the cot, looking down, a frown of concern and worry on his face. But the young woman slipped to her knees beside the cot and took one of the thin hands in her two hands and gently stroked it.

"I can't tell you how sorry I am," said Drake, awkwardly. "The work has been too hard."

"No," replied the sick man, in a voice that had not wholly lost its finely resonant quality. "No, the work must always be done. I regret that I have made it difficult for you. Your responsibility is very great. I have come to see that. I wished to see you in order to assure you that I shall not fail you. Not again."



"But you can't go on with it, surely?"

The doctor, who had moved back into the doorway, caught the director's eye and shook his head.

"Yes," replied Horace Bancroft, "I can go on. We must complete the picture. It has occurred to me that if you can arrange to have someone make me up and then have me carried to the set I shall be able to go through those final scenes."

"Oh, no!" cried Miss Strange softly. She looked up, emotional creature that she was, that she had to be, with tears in her eyes. "Oh, no, Dr. Bancroft! It might kill you. We can't let you do that! It isn't right!"

The old man painfully lifted the book. Gently he said, "I shall if you don't mind, read a few words that have sustained me in many difficult periods of my life." And he read this—"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst . . . And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." "And this further word, if you will bear with me . . . 'Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'" He lowered the book. "My dear young friends, it is better to do the work. Only a little faith is required." He smiled. "Not even a great faith. We must have that little faith."

## VI

Alice stepped down from the street car and walked slowly over toward the apartment. It was hot, and she was tired.

She had turned into the hallway when the creamy yellow roadster drew up at the curb. She turned, peered out there, and then in sudden weakness leaned against the wall. An alert young man stepped out; then a girl; and then Horace. They were helping him. She rushed out there.



"Horace, you are ill! I've worried so!"

"Oh, no," cried the girl. . . . or was she quite a girl?

. . . "He's ever so much better! He's wonderful!"

Alice drew back uncomfortably. The girl was beautiful, with large glistening eyes. Not a timid girl. Not quite . . . It was puzzling. The young man was helping Horace up the stairs.

The girl, who seemed in a state of excitement, talked rapidly on. "Sylvester could never have made the picture without him. He'll tell you that himself." She didn't observe that the young man, with a glance at Horace, turned back with a frown and a quick shake of his head. "He *knows* so much! All about Syria and Babylon and those things. He caught so many little points that were wrong. Of course you couldn't expect the continuity men to know all that. And he is a perfectly marvelous Isaiah! You've no idea! Why, my dear, he's going to be a sensation! It's absolutely a new note! And he isn't going to be ill. Dr. Southern is sure of that. It's his mental vitality. Dr. Southern says a spirit like that would carry a man through anything. Faith, you know. We're all crazy about him. Even the workmen talk about him. I tell you, they love him!"

They laid him on the worn old sofa. That young man himself removed his shoes and asked for his slippers, which Alice, all in a flutter, brought.

Horace at last, in his kindly absent way, introduced them. "Miss Strange, Alice. And Mr. Drake. They have been very kind."

"Dr. Southern said he would look in on you this evening," said the young man, mopping his high forehead. "I gave him the address. You must be sure and call me up if there's anything I can do. . . . Oh, one other thing! I'm going to ask you not to listen if any of the other companies try to talk a contract with you. I can't do my great 'Moses in Egypt' without you. I telephoned Mr. Kerdok from the camp, and he's very glad to continue your salary until we can draw up the new contract. I can assure you it will be liberal. None of the others will do any better by you than



we will." He turned to the sister with a chuckle. "I shall have to ask you to join me in a conspiracy to keep him out of barber shops, Miss Bancroft. That was our only difficulty. At first, that was. He did seem to have it a good deal on his mind for a while."

They were gone. Alice stood at the top of the stairs staring down until that unbelievable yellow roadster drove away. Sylvester Drake! And Sybil Strange! . . . Her pulse was racing madly, and her breath was uncertain. Once again she had to steady herself against the wall.

She returned slowly, uncertainly, to the front room, sank into the rocker by the window, said, chokingly—"Oh, Horace!"—and then burst into tears.

He lay quietly back with closed eyes. But at last he spoke. "My dear, I'm going to ask you to bring the satchel from my closet."

She was glad to be stirring. She set it beside the sofa and waited. He raised his lids, and with that familiar patient expression on his face, moved a hand. "Open it, Alice."

She obeyed, kneeling on the floor. Within were heaps and rolls of banknotes. She saw tens, twenties, fifties! She sank back and meekly sat there. The silence was long.

"I can tell you now, my dear. I have been through great trouble. They refused to relieve me from my contract. For a long time I could not see the light. But of late my vision has cleared. It doesn't seem to me now that I have done wrong. It is honest work, not wanting in dignity. I feel now that I can accept it."

Crying again, but not unhappily, she breathed the two words, "Sybil Strange!"

"Furthermore," he went on, "I have come to feel that we may have been somewhat uncharitable in our judgment of these young people. Theirs is an emotional task. But even so, intimately associated with them, I have seen no evil. . . . My thought at first was only to make your life more happy. Then bewilderment came. I didn't know what to do. I had put my hand to the plough. At least, now, you know the truth. And it will not be necessary for your work to go on."



She was smiling nervously through her tears. "But Horace, dear . . . I don't know how to tell you . . . I'm in the movies, too!"

"Indeed?"

"But I did tell part of the truth. It is library work. They do have libraries, you know! And Horace, I'm afraid . . . Horace, I like it! It is the first work I have found in years that interests me. I don't think I want to stop. I know I don't. Horace, I'm . . . growing."

"That may be so," said he, thoughtfully. "Yes, it would be so. Work is best. We have much, very much, to be thankful for, Alice."

"We'll take a bungalow over in the hills and have servants . . . Oh, Horace!"

## VII

The yellow roadster roared away. It was a familiar enough sight—a gay little car, a good-looking young man at the wheel, a doll of a girl in pretty clothes cuddled down beside him. But both were grave and silent; both studied the pavement ahead.

"We could," he remarked grimly—"we could, I suppose, pick up our bags and make the dash for Frisco. But . . ."

"Sylvie," she said, "I've got to tell you something. I'm through. I don't want you to take it hard. But I'm . . . well . . . I'm going back to Joe. If he'll take me. I've been thinking. Probably the best way to break it off is quick. Right now. Let me off here, Sylvie. I'll walk over to the Ambassador and pick up a taxi. Please, right here. I'd rather walk a little while. I want to be alone. Just don't think hardly of me. I've . . . loved you, Sylvie. No, don't kiss me."

The car pulled in by the curb. Quickly, lightly, she stepped out. She was an exquisite figure.

"Just one thing . . ." said he.

"I can't talk now, Sylvie. Please! Good-bye. It's been pretty stirring, but . . ."

"Just this, dear. I've wired my wife. Yesterday. Asked



her to come out with the children. There's probably an answer over at the house by now."

"Does she know, Sylvie? About me?"

"I don't think so. Anyhow, I'm going through."

Quickly she walked away. And the yellow car roared out along the Boulevard toward Hollywood.



## Biographical Data

WILLIAM FREDERICK BIGELOW, who named as the best story published last year in *Good Housekeeping* "Little Fräulein and the Big World," by Ida A. R. Wylie, was born in Ohio. From Wesleyan University and Columbus, he came to the editorial staff of the *Cosmopolitan*, and since 1913 has had a successful career in the editorship of *Good Housekeeping*. He keeps in touch with the actualities of life in his home in Roselle Park, N. J., by serving as a church trustee, a school director and a director in the local bank

∴

IDA A. R. WYLIE, whose story, "Little Fräulein and the Big World," was selected by W. F. Bigelow as the best story he published in *Good Housekeeping* in 1924, was born in Melbourne, Australia, and was taken to England when she was three. Her mother died when she was five and after that she was brought up "nohow" by her father and spent her days roaming alone with a bicycle over the country. At fourteen she toured the fjords of Norway unchaperoned. Later came three years at a "finishing" school in Brussels, two years at Cheltenham College in England, then another "finishing" school in Germany. At twenty she wrote her first story. Her first novel (written at twenty-two) was published in England and America. In 1917 she wrote "Towards Morning."

She is widely traveled. Norway, Germany, France, Italy, United States (ten months touring California by car), Central America and Mexico. At present she is living in England.

Of this story, Mr. Bigelow says:

"Of all the stories that I read during 1924 the one that



I liked best was I. A. R. Wylie's 'Little Fräulein and the Big World.' Having said that much, and being asked to tell why I liked it best, I find it a bit difficult to do so, for I read other stories that were as faultless as it in technique, others that were as full of suspense, others that plumbed as far into the depths of emotion. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that no other single story that I read had all these qualities so skilfully combined. On any count—plot, motive, suspense, dénouement, technique—Miss Wylie's story met the test of fine and splendid writing."



RAY LONG, who selected Irvin S. Cobb's "Standing Room Only" as the best story published during the year in the *Cosmopolitan*, is a brilliant example of the self-made American. Born in Lebanon, Ind., he started life as a telegraph messenger boy, and at the age when many boys are fitting themselves for college was busy supporting his mother and sisters. Starting newspaper work on the Indianapolis *News*, he rose quickly and became first managing editor of the Cincinnati *Post* and later of the Cleveland *Press*. His first magazine experience was as editor of *Hampton's*. For six years he had a successful career as editor of the *Red Book*, *Blue Book* and *Green Book*. Since 1919, he has been Vice President of the International Magazine Company and editor in chief of all the magazines it publishes.

∴

IRVIN S. COBB, author of "Standing Room Only," was born in Paducah, Ky., on June 23, 1876. Educated in the public schools, two universities have made him an LL.D. Starting as a newspaper man, he became a feature writer on The New York *Evening World*, and then began writing for the magazines. Famous as a war correspondent and humorous lecturer, he is the author of many books, including the Judge Priest stories and "Speaking of Operations," as well as several plays. His story, "Standing Room Only," was chosen by Ray Long, Editor of the *Cosmopolitan*, who says of it:

"I like 'Standing Room Only' better than any story we published in *Cosmopolitan* in 1924 because all the credit for the exceptional effectiveness of the story was due to the writer.

"This story handles an old theme, which has been treated very effectively by Edna Ferber in her story of old man Minick and by a number of other writers—the story of the elderly man (or woman) torn from his natural roots and transplanted to a soil that is uncongenial, no matter how friendly it may be.

"I am not one of those who believe that there are only seven plots for stories, but I do believe very thoroughly that an old plot in the hands of a master craftsman very often becomes a better story than a new plot in the hands of one with less ability."



HARRY EDWARD MAULE, who selected as one of the best stories published in *Short Stories* "Shackles of Service," by Meigs O. Frost, was born in Fairmount, Neb. He had wide experience as a newspaperman before he joined the editorial staff of the Doubleday Page publications in 1907. Since 1911 he has been editor of *Short Stories*. He has written a book about inventions for boys, and has contributed to various magazines. In 1924 he originated and organized the new magazine entitled, *The Frontier*.

∴

MEIGS OLIVER FROST, whose story, "Shackles of Service," was selected by Harry E. Maule as one of the best in *Short Stories* during 1924, was born in New Britain, Conn. He was educated at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass., and Haverford College, Pa. His home is in New Orleans, La., where he has served as a reporter, feature writer and contributor to magazines. He served as Lieutenant in the Field Artillery on the Mexican Border and in the World War.

Of Mr. Frost's story, "Shackles of Service," Mr. Maule says: "Inasmuch as the editors asked us to select the stories we liked best from those published in *Short Stories* during the year just closed, we made a personal, rather than professional, choice. The Committee of Selection had chosen 'Shackles of Service' by Meigs O. Frost from the three nominated. They have made an excellent choice, although we ourselves could not have selected one of the three to stand above the other two.

"Some one has said of Joseph Conrad that one of the elements of his greatness was that his novels, as those of no one else, exemplified the integrity of man to his ideals and to his fellow-man. If that is a factor in Conrad's greatness, so too is it a factor in the excellence of this story. In Conrad's books we have the integrity of the seaman to his ship. So here we have in the 'Shackles of Service' the integrity of the railroad man to the ideal of service. We have the integrity of the old-time engineer to his locomotive."



GERTRUDE BATTLES LANE, who selected as one of the best short stories published in the *Woman's Home Companion*, "Romance and Sally Byrd," by Ellen Glasgow, has been editor of that magazine since 1911, and prior to that Associate Editor. Born in Saco, Me., she was educated at Thornton Academy. Before coming to New York she was editor in a Boston publishing house.

∴

ELLEN GLASGOW, whose story "Romance and Sally Byrd," was selected by Gertrude B. Lane, editor of the *Woman's Home Companion*, as one of the best in that magazine, is a Virginian. Born in Richmond, she has spent most of her life there in a large old-fashioned Southern house, where she has written the stories of the South which have entertained the world for the past quarter century. Educated in private schools, she started writing when very young, and her first work was published when she was eighteen. She has been a contributor to magazines for many years and has a long list of books to her credit, many of which have been translated into other languages. Her latest novel, "Barren Ground," was published this spring.

Of Ellen Glasgow's story Miss Lane says:

"We consider 'Romance and Sally Byrd' one of the best stories we published during 1924 because it is a story that in its appeal is both local and universal; then it is told with a distinction and an artistry that lift it above all but the few; finally, it says something: that first love isn't the only love, that it is, in fact, little more than the cry of the race for the moon—an honest facing of an old romantic fallacy."



ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, who selected as one of the best stories published in *Adventure*, "The Primitive Method," was born in Columbus, Ohio, and educated at Ohio State University and the University of Chicago. He has been a teacher, a country editor, and held editorial positions on various magazines, before becoming editor of *Adventure* in 1911. He is the author of two books on fiction writing.

∴

FREDERICK ROBERT WAKELIN-BUCKLEY, the author of "The Primitive Method," chosen by Mr. Hoffman as one of the best stories published in *Adventure*, is British by birth, although his home is now in Norwalk, Conn. Born in the north of Ireland he was educated in England. Though not yet thirty he has had wide experience in England and America in newspaper work, advertising and as a scenario writer and an actor. He won the O. Henry Short Story Prize in 1922, and was given honorable mention in 1923. His first novel, "The Sage Hen" has just been published in America and England.

Of his story, Arthur Sullivan Hoffman, editor of *Adventure*, says:

"'The Primitive Method' was chosen as one of the best stories in *Adventure* during 1924 because it meets with fullness and nicety the general requirements of the short story. It is in particular an excellent example of the dramatic values of repression and suppression. And it is an illustration of the fact that, acting being the crystallization of all psychology, the 'action story,' which so many are inclined to hold in contempt, is at its best the supreme test of an author's ability to delineate character. Characterization through the action and performance of the characters themselves is infinitely more difficult than an author's word analysis of character and correspondingly greater as an artistic accomplishment."



SEWELL HAGGARD, who selected as one of the best stories published in *Everybody's*, Michael Arlen's "The Dancer of Paris" was born in Lebanon, Tenn., where he went into newspaper work, becoming managing editor of the *Birmingham Age-Herald*, and then managing editor of the *Baltimore Evening News*. After working on New York newspapers, he became managing editor of *McClure's Magazine* and has since had wide experience in judging fiction as editor of *The World To-day*, *Nash's*, *The Designer* and the *Woman's Magazine*. In 1921 he became editor of *Everybody's Magazine*.

∴

MICHAEL ARLEN, author of "The Dancer of Paris," is the pen name of a young Armenian, Dikran Kouyoumdjian educated in England, who, not yet thirty, has already achieved an international reputation as a writer of short stories and novels. He lives in Mayfair but spends much time on the Riviera and in Venice. When he was twenty he published a volume of memoirs and confessions. His books that are best known in this country are "These Charming People," a collection of short stories and a recent novel, "The Green Hat." The story, "The Dancer of Paris," was one of several nominated by Sewell Haggard, editor of *Everybody's*, as among the best stories published in that magazine during the year. The final selection was made by the Supervising Committee. Mr. Haggard says of this story:

"There are two big reasons why 'The Dancer of Paris' was chosen to appear in *Everybody's Magazine*. It is a human story and it is a distinguished story. It is simple, appealing, and is told in a fine spirit. It is serious without being earnest, and there is an easy, natural gayety and light-heartedness about it that is very pleasing. Technically it is a good job. Arlen's sense of values is very exact. His people are delightful and beautifully drawn."



## 406 *The World's Best Short Stories of 1925*

MERLE CROWELL, who selected as the best story published in the *American Magazine*, "Wild Bill McCorkle," written by the late Samuel Derieux, was born in North Newport, Me. Educated at Coburn Classical Institute and Colby College, he came to New York and was a reporter on the *Evening Sun*. In 1915 he joined the *American Magazine* as associate editor and staff writer and in 1923 he was made editor in chief.

∴

SAMUEL ARTHUR DERIEUX, author of "Wild Bill McCorkle," selected by Merle Crowell as the best story published in the *American Magazine*, was born in Richmond, Va., but all of his boyhood was spent in a small town just at the beginning of the Blue Ridge Mountains in South Carolina. He was the son of a minister whose hobby was hunting and outdoor life, so the background of his stories is made clear. Graduated from Richmond College, he did graduate work in history at Johns Hopkins, and took a master's degree in English at the University of Chicago. For a few years he alternated between teaching English in colleges and living in remote country sections of South Carolina, and in 1918 he joined the staff of the *American Magazine*, remaining until his death in 1922. His dog stories were the first to be successful. After Mr. Derieux's death a collection of the dog stories was published under the title of "Frank of Freedom Hill," and in 1923 appeared "Annual Personalities."

Of the story published here, Mr. Crowell says:  
" 'Wild Bill McCorkle' is a tale of friendship, simply told. Like Conrad's stories of the sea, or Kipling's stories of British life in the colonies, it bears the unmistakable, ringing quality of reality. A native of the Carolina Mountains, Samuel Derieux knew his setting and his people. In 'Wild Bill McCorkle,' he gave us not only a short story of force and vigor but a transcript of life. Every line is written with authority, written by one who shares the emotions of the characters he delineates, and who sees life with clearer eyes than they possess."



CARL VAN DOREN, who selected Zona Gale's "The Biography of Blade" as the best story published in *The Century* has a high standing as a literary critic. Born in Hope, Ill., he was educated at the University of Illinois and took his Ph.D. degree at Columbia. After teaching English in various universities, he became editor of *The Nation* and since 1922 has been Literary Editor of *The Century*. He has written "A Short History of American Literature," and has written or edited many volumes of literary or biographical material.

∴

ZONA GALE, author of "The Biography of Blade," selected by Carl Van Doren as the best short story published in *The Century*, was born in Portage, Wis., which is now her home. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin, she has had wide experience as a writer, first in newspaper work on the Milwaukee papers, then for four years on the staff of the New York *World*, and since as a writer of short stories, plays and novels, the best known of her recent novels being "Miss Lulu Bett" and "Faint Perfume."

Of her story, Mr. Carl Van Doren, Literary Editor of *The Century*, says:

"Without feeling disposed to say that Zone Gale's story, 'The Biography of Blade,' is the best story I have published in *The Century Magazine* this past year, I can without difficulty say that it is the one which I have personally liked most. It seems to me to be admirably constructed and flawlessly phrased. It deals with a more or less universal theme, which it presents with impeccable clarity. Though very brief, it covers all the ground necessary and says all that needs to be said about a dramatic moment in the life of a man who is here interpreted once for all. I am partial to that sort of fiction which distills life, and 'The Biography of Blade,' I think, is pure distillation, without inferior matter in it anywhere."



## 408 *The World's Best Short Stories of 1925*

THOMAS B. WELLS, who selected as the best short story published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1924, "Loutré," by Lisa Ysaye Tarleau, was born in Painesville, Ohio. A graduate of Yale University, he joined Harper & Brothers shortly after leaving college. In 1902 he became an associate editor of their magazine, in 1925 one of the directors, and he is now editor of *Harper's Magazine*.

∴

MRS. LISA YSAYE TARLEAU, whose story "Loutré," was selected by the editor as the best published in *Harper's Magazine* during the year, is a New Yorker. This story of hers was also given second prize in a competition held by this magazine, where the decision was made by an outside jury. Mrs. Tarleau's first work appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and she has published one book, "The Inn of Disenchantment."

Of her story, the editor who published it says:

"For any one of several reasons 'Loutré' might be offered as the best short story of the year. For its delicately ironic idea, for the charm and vivacity of its style, or for the suavity with which interest in the plot is developed and held. But it is impossible to give one of these reasons as the basis for a choice, because it is their fusion which gives 'Loutré' its literary fillip, its quality of sophisticated distinction."



LOREN PALMER, who named as the best story published in *Collier's*, "The Most Dangerous Game," by Richard Connell, was born in Chateaugay, New York, and educated at Wesleyan University. After a successful newspaper career in New York he became Sunday editor of the *Sun*. Later he was managing editor of *Every Week* and of *Popular Science Monthly*. Joining *Colliers* in 1920, he became managing editor and then editor.

..

RICHARD CONNELL, whose story, "The Most Dangerous Game," was named by Loren Palmer, editor of *Collier's*, is not yet thirty and is of the Harvard school of writers, where he wrote editorials for the *Daily Crimson*. From college he went into newspaper work and then advertising. The war bit a two-year chunk out of his actual working life, but gave him a great love for France, particularly Paris, and some of his stories have French settings. When he is not in New York, where he lives in winter, or in Riverside, Conn., where he plays tennis in summer, he is likely to be found in front of a café on the Boulevard St. Michel. Some of his stories have been made into books, "The Sin of Monsieur Pettipon" and "Variety."

Of "The Most Dangerous Game," Loren Palmer says:

"To write a story that will grip a million readers is to do a masterly piece of work. For an audience of so many may not be assumed to have any specialized background of knowledge or culture; it is just folks. Therefore, the story that reaches it has appealed to those human interests which are both broadest and deepest.

"No simpler situation exists in fiction nor in life than the one of which Richard Connell builds 'The Most Dangerous Game'—the struggle between two men for supremacy. The situation is always fraught with drama in real life, and since every one of us daily marshals wit and power to master whatever forces that day pursue us, every one of us feels with one pursued and with one pursuing. The reader of this story finds himself there."



## 410 *The World's Best Short Stories of 1925*

HARRY PAYNE BURTON, who named as the best story he published in *McCall's Magazine*, "The Spring Flight," by Inez Haynes Irwin, was born in Cleveland and educated at Western Reserve University and Kenyon College. He had a varied newspaper career that culminated in his serving as a war correspondent in Europe for the Scripps-Howard newspapers and the United Press. In 1921 he became editor of *McCall's Magazine*, where his selection of good fiction has attracted much attention to his work.

∴

INEZ HAYNES IRWIN, who wrote "The Spring Flight," selected by H. P. Burton, editor of *McCall's*, had also the honor of winning with this story this year's O. Henry Prize. She is the wife of Will Irwin, author and war correspondent. Born in Rio Janeiro, she was educated in Boston and at Radcliffe College. She saw much of the war and air raids. She lives in New York in winter and in Scituate, Mass., in summer. She has written many magazine stories and is the author of two children's books, "Maida's Little Shop," "Maida's Little House"; two books on California, "The Californians," "The Native Son"; five collections of short stories, "Phoebe and Ernest," "Phoebe, Ernest and Cupid," "The Happy Years," "Janey," "The Ollivant Orphans"; the following novels, "June Jeopardy," "Angel Island," "The Lady of Kingdoms," "Out of the Air"; and one history, "The Story of the Woman's Party." Her most recent novel, "Discarded" is about to appear serially.

Of her story Mr. Burton says:

"I like 'The Spring Flight' because of its fidelity to Shakespeare's life and age: because of the transforming imagination that endows facts with romance and harmonizes them with its own invention in a boldly designed, finely wrought tapestry. I like it because it is a good story. Written around a story peculiarly difficult, it progresses dramatically to a climax of defeat, a climax of success, and ends with a contagious uplift of spirit."



W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM, author of "The Letter" is an English doctor, born in 1874, educated at Canterbury, at Heidelberg University and at St. Thomas's Hospital, where his experience with human derelicts led to his first book, "Lisa of Lambeth." Other books of his that have won fame are "Of Human Bondage" and "The Moon and Sixpence." He has written many short stories and is the author of ten or twelve successful plays. "Rain" which had a phenomenal run in New York is based on one of his short stories.

Of "The Letter," selected as the best story published in *Hearst's International* in 1924, Ray Long, the editor, says:

"I feel that of all the stories we published in *Hearst's International* during 1924, 'The Letter,' by W. Somerset Maugham, probably was the most effective.

"I liked it because it presented with such effectiveness the reactions of occidentals in an oriental setting, and because it worked out so vividly the psychology of a certain type of woman in a certain set of circumstances."



MRS. WILLIAM BROWN MELONEY, who named as one of the best stories published in the *Delineator* Honoré Willsie Morrow's "Fighting Blood," after a successful career as a writer on the *New York Sun* and other newspapers, became editor of the *Woman's Magazine*, then of *Everybody's* and since 1920 of the *Delineator*. She was decorated by the Belgian Government for her services in behalf of Belgian children and was made a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor for her promotion of the movement to bring recognition and support in America to Mme. Curie. She is a director in various organizations for children's welfare. She is married to Major William Brown Meloney, an author of several novels.

HONORE WILLSIE MORROW, who wrote "Fighting Blood" selected by Mrs. William Brown Meloney, as one of the best stories published in the *Delineator*, was born in Ottumwa, Iowa, educated at the University of Wisconsin, and spent two years in the Arizona desert before coming to New York to write. Her desert trip was later supplemented by long periods in the mining districts, the mountains and the Northwestern cow country. Never does she place a novel in any section unless it is intimately known to her.

For five years she was editor in chief of the *Delineator*, but in 1919 decided to devote her entire time to writing. Her first novel, "The Heart of the Desert" won her immediate recognition. Since then she has written "Still Jim," "Lydia of the Pines," "Benefits Forgot," "The Forbidden Trail," "The Enchanted Canyon," "Judith of the Godless Valley," "The Exile of the Lariat," "The Devonshers" and "The Lost Speech of Abraham Lincoln."

Mrs. Meloney, who selected her story, says of it:

"The jury chooses 'Fighting Blood.' From a list of notable short fiction published during 1924 in the *Delineator* it selects Honoré Willsie Morrow's story of pacifism turned militant—a Quaker girl who single-handed fights bootlegging, sin and sickness on an Indian reservation in the Rockies. Out of such material, which she intimately knows, the author of 'The Enchanted Canyon,' 'Still Jim,' 'The Devonshers' and many other distinguished novels has shaped an authentic story of America's great West.



ARTHUR TURNER VANCE, who named as one of the best stories of those he published in *Pictorial Review*, "November the Nineteenth," by Elsie Singmaster, has shown his capabilities as a judge of good fiction by a successful career as editor of women's magazines. Born in Scranton, Pa., after a brief time in newspaper work, he became editor of the *Home Magazine*, and later associate editor of the *New England Magazine*. He was for some years editor in chief of the *Woman's Home Companion*, and since 1907 has been editor in chief of the *Pictorial Review*. He is an author and an occasional contributor to various periodicals.

ELSIE SINGMASTER LEWARS, author of "November the Nineteenth," who writes under her maiden name, is a Pennsylvanian by birth and residence. Most of her early life was spent in Lehigh County, where she acquired a knowledge of the Pennsylvania Germans which formed the basis for her first literary work.

She was a student first at Cornell, then at Radcliffe, graduating from the latter institution in 1907.

For twenty years she has lived in Gettysburg, and the battlefield with its stirring history has furnished her with many themes. She has published stories in *The Century*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *Outlook*, *Pictorial Review* and other magazines, and in addition five novels, various stories for young people, a volume of short stories and one of biography. Her latest novel, "The Hidden Road," was published in June, 1923. Her history of the United States for children is published this fall.

Of Elsie Singmaster's story, "November the Nineteenth," Mr. Vance says:

"It is almost a tradition among magazine editors that stories of Lincoln are always good, though some are better than others. And this story by Elsie Singmaster not only has a Lincoln interest but is a mighty good story as well. It certainly deserves high rank in the Lincoln legend that is growing more and more in volume and in popularity as the years go on. I will defy any good American to read this story without getting a patriotic thrill out of it. It gives us another picture of the great American, a new slant at his kindness, his simplicity, his essentially human greatness. It is indeed an opportunity to broadcast something so genuinely worth while."



CHARLES AGNEW MACLEAN, who named as the best story published in *The Popular Magazine*, A. S. Chisholm's "Tim of Bush Valley," has had a long and successful record as a picker of good fiction. Born in Ireland, he was brought to the United States at the age of five, and educated in the Brooklyn Boys' High School. From newspaper work he entered the magazine field, becoming editor of *Popular Magazine* in 1901. Since 1906 he has been managing editor of all the Street and Smith magazines. He is the author of two pieces of fiction, "The Mainspring" and "Here's to the Day."

∴

A. M. CHISHOLM, whose story, "Tim of Bush Valley," was selected by Charles Agnew Maclean as the best published in *The Popular Magazine*, was born in Hamilton, Ont., and educated at Albert College and at Toronto University, from which he graduated in arts and law, and Osgoode Hall, Ont., Law School. He practiced law for a short time, entered the trust and loan business, went West to Saskatchewan as manager of the Western branch of a trust company, but gave up that business to devote his time to writing.

Of his story, Mr. Maclean says:

"To decide among a good many stories of almost equal merit is a very difficult thing, and largely a matter of taste. It is quite possible that stories have appeared in the magazine during the past year with more sophistication of style than this one by Mr. Chisholm. On the other hand, Chisholm's story is one that is calculated to interest a large number of Americans in a wholesome, lucid way. It is good enough for a highly educated person to enjoy, and yet it has kept the common touch. More than this, and perhaps the best quality of all, is that it is thoroughly American; it is racy and of the soil; it has the pioneer spirit in it; it has a simple direct sentiment. It has the true atmosphere of a frontier that is fading so rapidly."



KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, editor of the *Red Book*, who named "More Stately Mansions" as one of the best stories he had published during the year, is well qualified to act as a judge of good fiction. Born in Ann Arbor, Mich., after graduating from the University of Michigan, he took up newspaper work in Detroit and London. He later edited *The Pilgrim* and for several years was managing editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal*. He himself has written many short stories and is the author of several books, among them "The Girl Out There" and "Sadie."

∴

SAMUEL MERWIN, author of "More Stately Mansions," was born in Evanston, Ill., on Oct. 6, 1874, and was educated at Northwestern University. He was formerly editor of *Success Magazine* and has traveled widely in China. He is the author of some twenty novels, among them "The Passionate Pilgrim" and "Temperamental Henry." His home is in Concord, Mass. His story was one of several named by Karl Edwin Harriman, editor of the *Red Book*, who says of it:

"Those of us who are concerned with the editorial direction of the *Red Book Magazine* considered this story by Mr. Merwin good for the same reason that prompts you to republish it. Because it is good. And it's good—and worthy of the widest possible reprinting—for the reason that it bears some relation to reality as a whole—not the half reality that is sometimes offered as the all of life. The pattern of the tale is woven of threads of tolerance, sympathy, compassion, charity and understanding, and the weaver who did the job is a man who is not entirely hopeless of humanity, even if he does live in Concord, Mass., but there, at his loom, creates fiction that will wear, that will wash and the colors of which will not run. Could a craftsman do more? And doing as much, should he not be exalted among his fellows? We think so."











**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE  
STAMPED BELOW**

**AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS  
WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN  
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY  
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH  
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY  
OVERDUE.**

NOV 11 1932

FEB 10 1933

DEC

JUL 11 1933

OCT 12 1933

OCT 23 1934

NOV 26 1937

NOV 14 1938

MAY 15 1948

12 Oct '48 DB

26 Jan '58 WW

REC'D ID

JAN 27 1953

LD 21-50m-8,32



760680

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY



